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Exclusive
**JENNY
AGUTTER**
Wild about wimples,
Facebook, sexiness
& celebrations!

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tastiest time
of year'*



Easy party dishes



Showstopper desserts



Slouch-on-the-couch
TV suppers!



*T&Cs apply.

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L'ORÉAL
PARIS

It's time for family, friends and celebrations

Don't you just love this time of year? No, please don't throw this magazine at the wall as you scream, 'Don't be ridiculous, there's so much to blooming do!' What I mean is, if we forget about the work involved in hosting the hordes and making the season happy for everyone else, what really matters right now is being with the people we care about.

For me, Christmas and New Year is about spending time with my parents (who I don't see nearly enough of), my husband and daughters (who I don't spend enough downtime with) and my lovely sister, brother and his family (who I hardly ever see!). It's the one time of year when, very briefly, work stops, emails halt and we get to look up and enjoy great company, food, wine and plenty of laughter. Yippee!

I hope you're looking forward to it as much as I am. And, we have lots in this issue to help you with your last-minute festive preparations, from easy recipes to great value gifts, as well as sparkly fashions and clever hair and make-up tips and tricks.

Our divine cover star Jenny Agutter says she'll be throwing herself fully into the celebrations, not least as it's also her son's birthday on Christmas Day. I'm sure we will all be tuning in to *Call the Midwife* with her in the evening – essential festive viewing and it's great news that the show is back again in January.

Also, don't miss our columnist Caroline Quentin as you've never seen her before – playing the ghastly Mrs Bumble in *Dickensian*, which starts on Boxing Day. It sounds like a hugely entertaining new series.

I hereby grant you permission to make yourself one of our slouch-on-the-couch TV suppers (see page 121) and put your feet up for the odd chill-out evening over the season.

You deserve it!

Gaby

GABY HUDDART, EDITOR

Don't miss the February issue, **ON SALE 1 January**

I'm loving our Elvi Prima Premium Collection. You can discover it for yourself at elvi.co.uk

Lets Party

100



114



12



162



34



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96

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January 2016



38



34



16

64



107



FASHION INSPIRATION

- 16** **On the cover** **Party pieces with more mileage** Transform your sparkly evening outfits into daytime heroes, too!
- 31** **Shape your night out** Dress-up tips and tricks to get you party-ready, whatever your body hang-up
- 34** **Instant glamour from £5!** Our pick of the best outfit pick-me-ups
- 37** **Buy it, wear it, love it!** All that's new in fashion

INSPIRING READS

- 12** **On the cover** **'The trick to feeling sexy is simply being yourself'** Actress Jenny Agutter talks to Prima about her favourite time of year, wearing a wimple and how she feels sexy at 62
- 38** **Our New Year reinventions** If you've ever felt stuck in a rut, take heart from these four readers who transformed their lives in 2015

- 44** **'I'm determined to create new memories'** Following a family tragedy, Victoria Milligan shares how she copes during the holidays and is focusing on the future
- 46** **It started with a New Year's kiss!** These readers say this is the perfect time of year for romance
- 50** **Learn to say no... it's such a positive word!** Bestselling author Cecelia Ahern talks about her New Year resolution
- 53** **'My festive survival kit'** The way to get through the season is with a glass (or two) of Chardonnay, says comedian Jenny Éclair
- 54** **'We're the party people!'** Meet the readers who make a living out of being at the centre of a party
- 58** **Simple ways to keep life sweet** Expert advice to make sure your festivities go smoothly
- 162** **A time traveller's life** Ahead of her role in BBC One's new drama *Dickensian*, Caroline Quentin wonders what Dickens would make of life in modern Britain

BEAUTIFUL YOU

- 60** **On the cover** **Easy tweaks to feel fresh faced!** Get glowing skin with top tips from expert Kazia Pelka
- 64** **On the cover** **Style your hair glam!** How to create the perfect party 'do
- 66** **Have a very gorgeous New Year** See in 2016 in style with these wow-factor special occasion looks
- 70** **The 12 buys of Christmas** Our fave last-minute beauty must-haves
- 73** **Try it, use it, love it!** The latest beauty buys and news

YOUR HEALTH

- 75** **On the cover** **The 3-day super-fast superfood diet!** Nutritionist Rick Hay's satisfying meal plan to help you get into shape quick!
- 79** **Sarah's surgery** Dr Sarah Brewer answers your health questions
- 82** **On the cover** **A health revolution in 2016!** Start your year as you mean to go on with these simple steps to feeling fitter and happier

144



126



54



100



114



96



94



GREAT ADVICE

- 86 **'Computer games took over my son's life'** A mother and son's story of overcoming addiction
- 90 **On the cover Red hot money advice from a real Dragon...** Entrepreneur Deborah Meaden shares her eight financial truths
- 92 **Get ready for the hottest tech of 2016** New gadgets you'll love
- 144 **Winter wonderland** Our pick of the coolest snowy escapes

HOME STYLE

- 94 **A fresh start** Sarah Beeny on the trends to watch out for in 2016
- 96 **'It's cold outside... come on in!'** A reader fills her Victorian home with hand-crafted decorations
- 100 **Let's get the party started!** Sparkly accessories for your home
- 102 **Girl about the house** Advice on how to be a domestic goddess
- 103 **Style it, do it, love it!** Home buys, plus all the new trends

COOKERY

- 107 **On the cover Come on over and celebrate!** Wow your guests with these mouthwatering party dishes
- 114 **On the cover Comfort & joy** Your friends and family will love these fantastic showstopping desserts
- 119 **Love your leftovers** Turkey isn't just for Christmas Day!
- 121 **On the cover Quick & tasty TV dinners** 30-minute meals
- 123 **Cook it, eat it, love it!** The latest foodie must-buys and know-how

MAKE IT

- 126 **On the cover Be magic in a little jacket** This month's Prima pattern
- 128 **Lisa Comfort customises it!** Whizz up a lovely jewellery roll
- 130 **Make and be merry!** Handmade gifts – or add cheer to your home
- 135 **Gorgeous knits to welcome 2016** Make a bolero or sweater
- 139 **Sew it, make it, love it!** Creative inspiration for the holiday season

EVERY MONTH

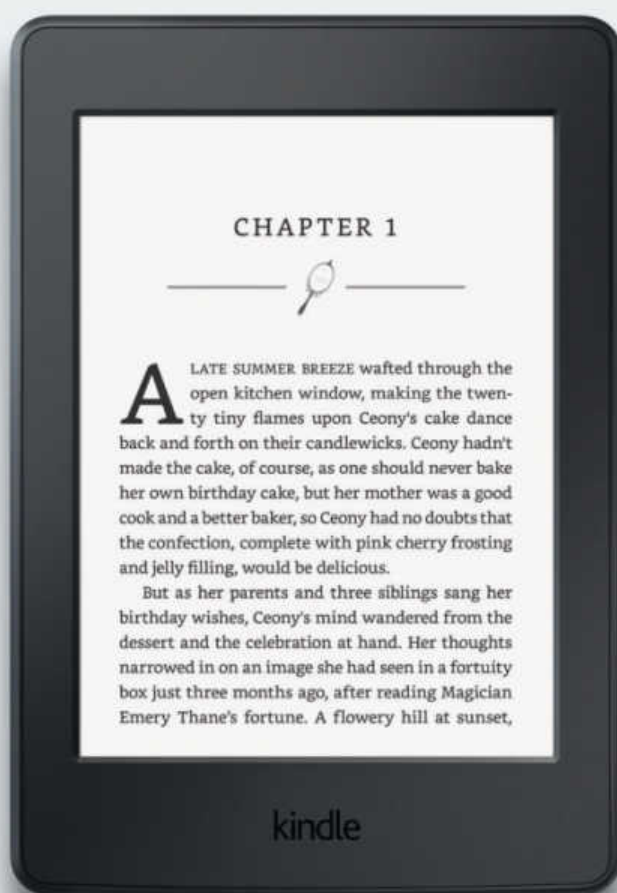
- 8 **Prima loves... last-minute Christmas gifts** Thoughtful presents for everyone on your list
- 140 **Your time off & time out** Our guide to this month's entertainment
- 143 **Curl up with a good book** The books you should dive into over the festive holidays
- 150 **The Prima chat room** Your views
- 160 **Where to buy** Stockist details
- 161 **Stars** What's in store for January

TREATS FOR YOU

- 37 **On the cover Win a Great Plains party dress**
- 63 **On the cover 25% off Saks hair & beauty treatments**
- 151 **Win! Win! Win!** Great goodies
- 152 **£100 prize** For your story
- 154 **Travel offers** Just for you
- 155 **Save money on your energy bills this winter**
- 157 **Puzzles** Win cash prizes!



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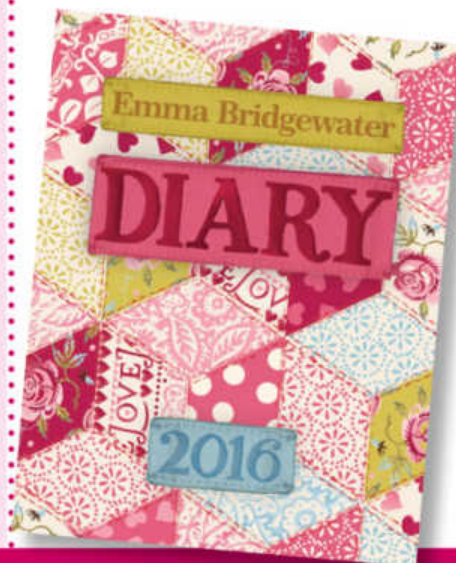
3 tasty gifts to share!



Rotating Tree biscuit tin, £10, Marks & Spencer. **Retro Radio biscuit tin**, £10, Waitrose. **Decorate Your Own Gingerbread House**, £4, Tesco



Emma Bridgewater A5 Deluxe 2016 diary, £11.50, Cotswold Trading



Kim Heart 'flip' mitts, £17.50, White Stuff. **Fifi Lapin tote bag**, £12, Boots

Ideal for text friends!



Visit friends and relatives with thoughtful gifts for everyone, from delicious food and drink offerings to the must-have box sets

Last-minute Christmas gifts



For a baking buddy!

Prima's The Joy of Baking with 139 fab recipes, £6.99, nationwide. **Ashley Thomas cake set**, £15, Debenhams



Pretty In Pink Prima bouquet, from £20.99, Flying Flowers

Artesa Cheese Wedge Cloche, Lakeland, £39.99. **Cheshire Appleby cheese**, £6 for 250g, Paxton & Whitfield



Perfect for cheese lovers

Gift guide



Copper and glass hanging wall frame with chain (5x7in), £14, Oliver Bonas

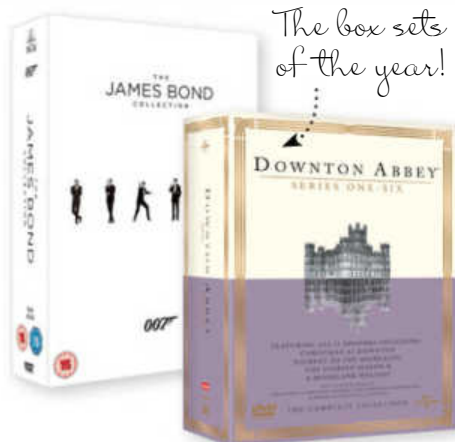
Small vintage bronze frame, £6, The Contemporary Home



Cartwright & Butler Bishop Burton hamper, £49.99, Lakeland



London Guards fleece robe; Bunny fleece robe, both £22, 2-13 years, Monsoon



The James Bond Collection (23 films), £39.90; **Complete Downton Abbey Series One-Six DVD set** (including Christmas specials), £59.99, both Amazon

The box sets of the year!



Pandora, £16.95, Carluccio's

Laura Ashley Royal Bloom hand soap and ceramic dish, £10; **Laura Ashley Royal Bloom fragranced candle**, £14, both Boots



3 bottles they'll love!
Veuve Monsigny Champagne Brut, £12.99 for 75cl, Aldi.
Feeney's Irish Cream, £12, Tesco.
Zubrówka Enchanted Forest Limited Edition bison grass vodka, £20, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Waitrose



Waiter wine stoppers, £15, Habitat

New in the shops



Give a friend a fab Prima subscription!
See page 104 for details

Gift guide



**Cluedo
crackers**, £5.99,
HomeSense

**Scrabble
Nostalgia**,
£35, Sainsbury's

Finest coconut truffles
in bauble; **Red Velvet
Reindeer truffles** in
bauble, £7.25 each,
both Prestat. **Rather
Large Cracker (with
40 chocolates)**,
£36, Hotel Chocolat



3 Bathtime treats



Sweet Pea & Honeysuckle bath melts,
£6, Heathcote & Ivory. **English Pear & Freesia
bath salts**, £30, Jo Malone. **Leafy & Lovely
Summer Meadow bath salts**, £5, Superdrug



Family Calendar 2016, £14,
The Contemporary Home



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go towards
helping the
homeless*

Jollie's socks,
£15, John Lewis



And not forgetting the pets...

Fifi And Fred cat treat jar, £10; **Fifi And
Fred dog bowl**, £8, both BHS. **Lily's Kitchen
Yuletide Delights Christmas dog
treats**, £12.95,
Waitrose. **Scottie
dog throw**,
£11.95 for 2,
House of Bath





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‘The trick to feeling sexy is simply being yourself’

Actress Jenny Agutter talks to Prima about her favourite time of year, how it's impossible to swear when wearing a wimple and how she feels sexy at 62

Jenny Agutter, 62, lives in London with her husband, Johan Tham. They have a son, Jonathan, 25, and she has two stepdaughters.

My favourite time of the year

Christmas has always been an important time in our house. Both my parents, my mother in particular, loved it; I was born just before Christmas, on 20 December, and my son was born on Christmas Day. My husband is Swedish, so we celebrate twice – on the 24th as well as the 25th. On the evening of Christmas Eve, we have a traditional smorgasbord and my father and his wife Angela come to celebrate with us.

On Christmas Day, it's often the three of us – me, my husband and son. We start the day with a stocking – I am a big believer in stockings and even when I went to live in LA in my twenties, my father would send me off at the airport with a stocking to open on Christmas Day. These days, we cook goose, open

presents and then, of course, we will watch the *Call the Midwife* Christmas special. My husband loves it, although he doesn't watch anything else I've been in, so it's not out of loyalty!

When it comes to New Year, I find it hard to let go. I always want to hang on to things. I also feel like I have to get everything tidied away before the year ends, so tend to focus on getting my paperwork tidied up rather than a big New Year's celebration. We usually hunker down rather than go out.

I often think about joining a gym in January. Then I join and realise it would have been cheaper to pay as I go! So this year, instead of joining a health club, I'm resolving to do stomach exercises and work on my core every day – it's so important for mobility and posture. I swim and do yoga, and have a rowing machine. But I'm by no means religious about exercise – I fit it in when I can.

I don't diet. But I really don't want to go up a dress size because it would be so annoying to have to replace all my

clothes. So if I feel like my clothes are getting a bit tight, I cut down on carbs, cakes and chocolates and go for periods without drinking wine – and it works.

Only once did I try a diet. Someone told me to only fill my fridge with healthy food. But celery wasn't really cutting it, so I spent the whole time looking in the fridge wondering what I could eat. I think the more you diet, the more obsessed by food and deprived you feel. It's better to eat a little of something that you like so you feel satisfied and not deprived.

The true loves of my life

I married late, partly because until then I didn't want to get married. I had a fear that marriage would make everything feel very habitual. But the great thing about doing it a bit later on is that you haven't grown up together, so there will always be something surprising about your partner and it's constantly fresh. Also, my husband and I share a lot of interests, like art and music and ➔

Jenny wears: Jumper, Belinda Robertson. Skirt, Eavis & Brown. Earrings: ring, both Basia Zarzycka. Shoes, Gianmarco Lorenzi at KK Studio

JENNY AGUTTER IN BRIEF

What did your parents give you?

A huge amount of freedom – they never restricted me in any way. Even when I announced I was going to America at the age of 21, they only ever supported me.

Cosmetic surgery: yes or no? I'm too squeamish. Although when someone invents something non-invasive that totally tones the face, I'll be all over it.

What's your motto? Be more patient and bite your tongue!

What keeps you awake at night? Silly things like whether I'll get a parking ticket in the place that I've parked. And caffeine.

Last time you were really happy? I'm quite a happy person – and I have a miniature wire-haired dachshund called Sophie. She makes me laugh all the time.

‘We cook goose, open presents and watch the *Call the Midwife* Christmas special’



travel, and experiencing those things together is lovely. We have different personalities so we have different points of view about things, and that's also a good thing as it keeps life interesting.

I have no idea what my husband thinks about me being in the public eye because we have never discussed it. But he doesn't particularly like 'occasions', which is an important part of my job. He's much more interested in real conversations, which means that he can be a bit of a liability at work parties because if he doesn't like something that someone says, he'll say so!

The trick to being sexy in your sixties is to be yourself. But you're never going to feel your best if you're not feeling as healthy and fit as you possibly can. I think it's a different kind of sexy to when you are in your twenties because you're not doing anything for anyone else; when you're older, you are who you are and have more confidence to simply be yourself.

I like dressing up for big occasions – it's fun. However, I do spend quite a lot of time at home and like to find clothes that are flattering and easy to wear, rather than tracksuit bottoms. I love soft fabrics – I'm a fan of jeans and T-shirts, too.

When I want to dress up, I choose Zandra Rhodes. She's always been a favourite because of the chiffons and silks she uses but also her clothes are always fun and dynamic. If I want to be sophisticated, I go for Catherine Walker, whose clothes are tailored and classic.

Like many mothers, I can think only of the things I've done wrong as a parent! I came to motherhood quite late, which meant that I wanted to be reasonable – I couldn't wait for my son to talk so we could have a conversation. But every time I look at him now and see this big person, all I can think is: where has that little baby gone? I loved watching his personality emerge and our relationship now is great. Jonathan is very funny and good company.

He was always brilliant in his school plays, but he chose to train as a doctor. He is a junior doctor now and I suppose his logic is that a doctor can always act in their spare time – clearly that doesn't go both ways!

I love being around young people. My son and his friends, and also the young actors that I work with on *Call the Midwife*, really connect me with things that are going on and it means that the world is always fresh. I love technology. I love

'The great thing about marrying later in life is that it constantly feels fresh'



the internet and my computer and, although I'm not much good at Twitter, I am on Facebook.

My working life

I fell into acting by chance. I was at ballet school and actually quite reticent – I was terrified of being on stage. But by the time I was 17, I had been in three films and had left education, which meant when I chose a career, I couldn't actually do anything else.

If I could do it all over again, I would continue my education so I had more choices. I might have done something visual, in graphic art or design or photography. I still take a lot of photos, but I tend to use the camera on my phone.

I was very lucky when I started out. I had the most fantastic agent called Theo Cowan, who was very funny and didn't take any of it seriously. He turned up to Cannes in a safari suit and when I was offered a part he'd ask, 'What's the grub like and where are they filming it?' He looked out for me and was more concerned for my welfare than the trappings of fame. He also taught me to differentiate between my home life and my public life, which was great advice.

Working in this business for so long, I've never found it hard to keep a level head. I know all too well that one day you can be top of the pile and the next you are at the bottom – and that's very levelling. In Hollywood, I had chauffeur driven cars one day then the next I'd turn up for a part and there were 20 people who looked exactly like me in the room. As a result of all that, I really don't believe the hype and am much more interested in having a happy home life.

I'm sometimes sitting on a bus and a stranger will say, 'I really loved *The Railway Children*.' Even though we made it more than 40 years ago, I'm still familiar to many people from that and I just hope I don't let them down – because I'm really not like that.

People often confuse me with the characters I play. Roberta from *The Railway Children* and Sister Julianne from *Call the Midwife* have something in common, which is that they are both very 'good'. And, as a result, people often seem to relate to me as if they know me, almost as a sister, daughter or mother. Sometimes – like if I'm driving and I put two fingers up at someone who has cut in front of me – I have to point out, 'I'm not the person you've seen on TV!'

That said, it's impossible to swear when you are wearing a nun's habit! When I'm in costume on *Call the Midwife*, I have to take it off before I can go and swear in peace. Playing Sister Julianne always tests my own sense of patience. She's so extraordinarily tolerant of everything around her and she wants only to deal with problems. Personally, I'm much more inclined to dodge the problem. Clearly, there was a love in Julianne's life before she became a nun, but she chose her sense of faith and duty over having a family. Of course, I can't personally relate to that, but as an actor you don't necessarily need to have a shared experience with the character you are playing – you just have to understand them.

And I did have a strong sense of religion in my early life because I was brought up Catholic. Even though Sister Julianne is Anglican, I can draw on my childhood experience – although I stopped being Catholic at 16 because there came a point when it didn't make sense to me any more. The other thing I draw upon is the memory of a nun who cared for my mother when she was ill. No matter what happened, she was full of hope, life and optimism.

I love acting, but would love to direct. I love the technical aspect of film-making: the lights and the camera. But I film *Call the Midwife* for six months of the year and Johan loves to travel when we're not working, so directing will have to wait. In 2015, we went to some Norwegian islands and saw orca whales, which was great. Our big hope for 2016 is to visit New Zealand.

• *The Call the Midwife Christmas special will be on BBC One on Christmas Day and the fifth series returns in January*

CALL THE MIDWIFE... What happens next?

The fifth series sees the transition from 1960 to 1961 and there's a sense of time changing in Poplar. Suddenly there is TV and the arrival of different values. In the last series, we saw a mother being treated for morning sickness with thalidomide and, in this series, we begin to see the results. Trixie sets up a keep fit class to encourage women to look after their bodies, which involves wearing a leotard and the nuns aren't sure about it. And, having lived through two World Wars, Sister Julianne is watching a new world unfold.

Party pieces with more **MILEAGE**

Day or night, dressed up or down... meet the any-time, anywhere party pieces that give you more looks for your money

THE DRESSY JACKET

DAY

A cocktail-appropriate jacket teamed with well-loved jeans and a simple cosy jumper is relaxed glamour at its best. It's a modern, casual way to do sparkle and provides an unexpected contrast for those wanting to shake up their daytime style and reuse their party dress-ups.

Sequin **bomber**, £130, 8-18, Phase Eight. Navy **roll-neck**, £8, 8-22, F&F at Tesco. Slim-fit **jeans**, £80, 24-34w/30-34i, Levi's



NIGHT

Everyone needs a special jacket after dark when your usual 9 to 5 cover-up just won't do. Whatever style of jacket you choose – lace, embellished, jacquard or faux fur – make it your hero piece. Want a fashion-forward option? This beaded bomber looks super cool and will still be going strong come spring.

Sequin **bomber**, as before. Embellished **top**, £48, 6-16, Oasis. Pleated **skirt**, £75, 8-16, Great Plains. Clutch **bag**, £32, Debenhams. Jewelled **sandals**, £150, 4-8, Ted Baker ➔



THE EMBELLISHED TROUSERS

NIGHT

Not sure how to do modern chic for New Year? It's not all about party dresses. A stunning pair of embellished trousers are the perfect up-to-the-minute cocktail look. Laid-back but dressy, they should be worn with a sleek blazer and a tucked-in crisp white shirt. Glossy party heels recommended.

Embellished **trousers**, £69, 14-26, Elvi Prima Premium Collection. Embellished **shirt**, £89, 8-20, Dickins & Jones at House of Fraser. Tuxedo **jacket**, £22, 8-20, Primark. Textured **waistcoat**, £125, 6-20, Biba at House of Fraser. Feather **clutch**, £45, Accessorize. Patent **stilettos**, £69, 3-9, Dune





DAY

Why save sparkle for night-time? Give these trophy trousers the day-friendly feel with slouchy tailored separates. This season it's all about the slim-fit roll-neck jumper styled with everything. Try wearing yours under a denim shirt and finish by elegantly draping a blazer over your shoulders.

Embellished **trousers**, as before.

Navy **roll-neck**, £65, s-xl, Hobbs. Denim **shirt**, £22, 6-22, Next. Grey **coat**, £79.99, 6-14, Mango. Grey **plimsolls**, £45, 2½-7½, United Colors of Benetton ➔



THE GLAM SKIRT

DAY

When the party's over, give your occasion skirt a new lease of life. Simply throw on a chunky knit to tone down skirts with pizzazz and make them weekday-worthy. Give your ladylike midi an unexpected twist by wearing a pair of borrowed-from-the-boys brogues.

Metallic **skirt**, £79, 8-18; roll-neck **jumper**, £79, s-m and m-l, both Phase Eight. Lace **blouse**, £98, 8-16, The White Company. Pom-pom **scarf**, £18, Next. Opaque **tights**, £4, xs-xl, Marks & Spencer. **Brogues**, £19.99, 3-9, Deichmann





NIGHT

Slip on that special skirt for an easy approach to eveningwear. It's a wardrobe superstar as it works around the clock and can be totally transformed at a moment's notice. This New Year, give your skirt standout status with glitter heels and a feather bolero.

Metallic **skirt**, as before. Sequin **jumper**, £110, 8-16, The White Company. Feather **bolero**, £39, Coast. Chandelier **earrings**, £7.99, H&M. Jewelled **clutch**, £55, Phase Eight. Cocktail **ring**, £15, Accessorize. Glitter **heels**, £45, 3-8, Oasis ➔





THE GLITZY TOP

NIGHT

Lost your sparkle for what to wear on a night out? A glittery, dazzling top will sort all your wardrobe woes, and works equally well with skirts or trousers. Why not get your magpie fix and go full-on glam by teaming with shimmery separates. After all, who doesn't love lots of compliments?

Embellished **top**, £50, 6-16, Oasis.
Sequin **skirt**, £39, 10-32, JD Williams.
Faux fur **jacket**, £120, 8-18; silver **clutch**, £65, both Phase Eight.
Gem **earrings**, £7.99, New Look.
Glitter **heels**, £125, 3-8, Ted Baker



DAY

Gorgeous party tops deserve frequent outings. Bling up your basics and let your sequins see the light of day. Layered over a long sleeved T-shirt with a trusty trench and casual trousers, your party top will look street style-appropriate.

Embellished **top**, as before. Long-sleeved **T-shirt**, £12.95, xxs-xxl, Gap. Khaki **trousers**, £29.99, 6-14, Mango. Beige **trench**, £130, xs-l, Oasis ➔



THE SLINKY JUMPSUIT

DAY

Avoid the morning wardrobe panic with the easiest outfit ever: the jumpsuit. It's that throw-on, no-need-to-coordinate, super-easy piece that never fails to make an impact. Get creative and learn to love layering. We styled the jumpsuit's belt over the top of a sleeveless jacket to create more definition and a high-end feel.

Belted **jumpsuit**, £120, 8-18, Phase Eight. Cotton **shirt**, £14.99, 10-20, H&M. Sleeveless **coat**, £189, 8-22, Linea at House of Fraser. Metallic **brogues**, £14, 3-7, George at Asda





NIGHT

Want to master modern party dressing? As night falls, the chic black one-piece proves jumpsuits can be just as sexy as an LBD. A dash of glitz and dressy extras, such as a faux fur stole and standout jewels, ensure of-the-moment glamour.

Belted **jumpsuit**, as before.

Faux fur **stole**, £20, F&F at Tesco.

Star **necklace**, £29.50; star **earrings**,

£15, both Marks & Spencer. Stacking

rings, £15 for 8, Accessorize ➔



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THE LITTLE BLACK DRESS

NIGHT

If you want an LBD that brings ultimate versatility, choose a style that's not super-tight. A fabulous frock that is simple, sophisticated and slightly unstructured will offer more value for money. You'll be able to effortlessly dress it up or down in endless ways.

Lace shirt **dress**, £149, 8-16, The White Company. Embellished **jacket**, £125, 6-20, Biba at House of Fraser. Metal **clutch**, £35, Marks & Spencer. Gem **necklace**, £14.99, New Look Premium. Gold **heels**, £22.99, 3-9, New Look ➔





DAY

Yes, your favourite LBD can work beyond the party. Layer a black top over your dress to cleverly create a whole new look. Alternatively, slip your LBD over opaque tights or leather leggings and swap glitzy heels for biker boots for a hint of grown-up grunge.

Lace shirt **dress**, as before.
Black **top**, £50, xs-xl, Great Plains.
Leather **jacket**, £39, 8-18, F&F at Tesco.
Opaque **tights**, £4, Marks & Spencer

Styling: Amanda Marcantonio
Assisted by: Helen Johnson and Emily Black
Photography: Catherine Harbour
Hair & make-up: James Butterfield



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#AGELESS

*Based on mass-market facial moisturiser and cleanser value sales for the past 12 months ending December 2014


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looking, it doesn't look
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It just looks like you.
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the **UK's #1***

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Up to 100% grey coverage



nice'n
easy

CLAIROL

Simone's colour is #8G Natural Honey Blonde.

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*based on IRI volume sales August 2014 to August 2015

Faux fur jacket,
£119, 8-18, Monsoon

Feather earrings,
£16, River Island

Metallic skirt, £99,
8-14, Almost Famous

Embellished top,
£45, xs-l, Oasis

YOUR BODY BUGBEAR:

WIDE HIPS

OUR SOLUTION:

Fabulous flared skirts are the answer to your wardrobe woes. They'll skim over your bottom-heavy pear shape and play up an hourglass silhouette. Add focus to your trim torso with embellishment and fur up top.

Tuck tops in to highlight your waistline

Shape

YOUR NIGHT OUT

Get party gorgeous whatever your body bugbear with our genius dress-up tips and tricks

YOUR BODY BUGBEAR:

NOT-SO-TRIM TUM

OUR SOLUTION:

Make waist-skimming silk blouses, ruched dresses and breezy tunics your new party plus ones. These will magic away your middle and streamline your silhouette, no post-Christmas diet required!

Sequin jumpsuit,
£68, 8-22, M&Co

Necklace,
£35, Coast

Embellished blouse, £70, xs-xl,
Great Plains

Red dress, £46, xxs-xxl,
H by Halston at QVC

Clutch bag, £55,
Debenhams

Jewelled heels,
£125, 3-7,
French Connection

Embellished top,
£65; **quilted skirt,**
£79, both 14-26,
Elvi Prima Premium
Collection

Elegant ruching will swirl over trouble spots

Feather skirt,
£80, 6-18, Oasis

Chic for your shape

YOUR BODY BUGBEAR: TUNED UPPER ARMS

OUR SOLUTION:

Yes, you can look super sexy without showing off your weakest link. Confidently conceal less-than-firm upper arms in fancy lacework, sheer delights and party-ready sequins – no one need know what's underneath but you.

Lace dress, £69,
8-20, Rochelle
Humes at Very

**Embellished
dress,** £129,
8-22, Monsoon

Sequin top,
£29.99,
xs-xl, H&M

Lace dress, £139,
6-20, Coast

**Sequin
dress,** £99,
8-18; stole,
£35, both
Phase Eight

*Arms look slimmer in
voluminous sleeves*

YOUR BODY BUGBEAR: WOBBLY LEGS

OUR SOLUTION:

Dark statement trousers and scene-stealing tuxedos are the new party alternatives for ladies feeling 'leg shy'. Make them dancefloor-worthy by adding a bejewelled jacket and accessories.

**Strapless
jumpsuit,** £129, 6-18,
Coast

**Jacquard
trousers,** £99,
6-22, Boden

Embellished blazer,
£125, 6-18, Biba at
House of Fraser

Bow blouse, £35,
6-18, River Island

Star earrings,
£15, White Stuff

Velvet heels,
£45, 3-8, Faith at
Debenhams

*Wide-leg
trousers are fab
for disguising
fuller thighs*

YOUR BODY BUGBEAR: BIG BUST

OUR SOLUTION:

DD cup or up? Get 100% body confident with a V-neckline that will flatter your fuller bust. Sequin trousers and skirts will create cocktail hour glamour and add balance to a top-heavy frame.

Lace dress,
£45, 6-22,
Next

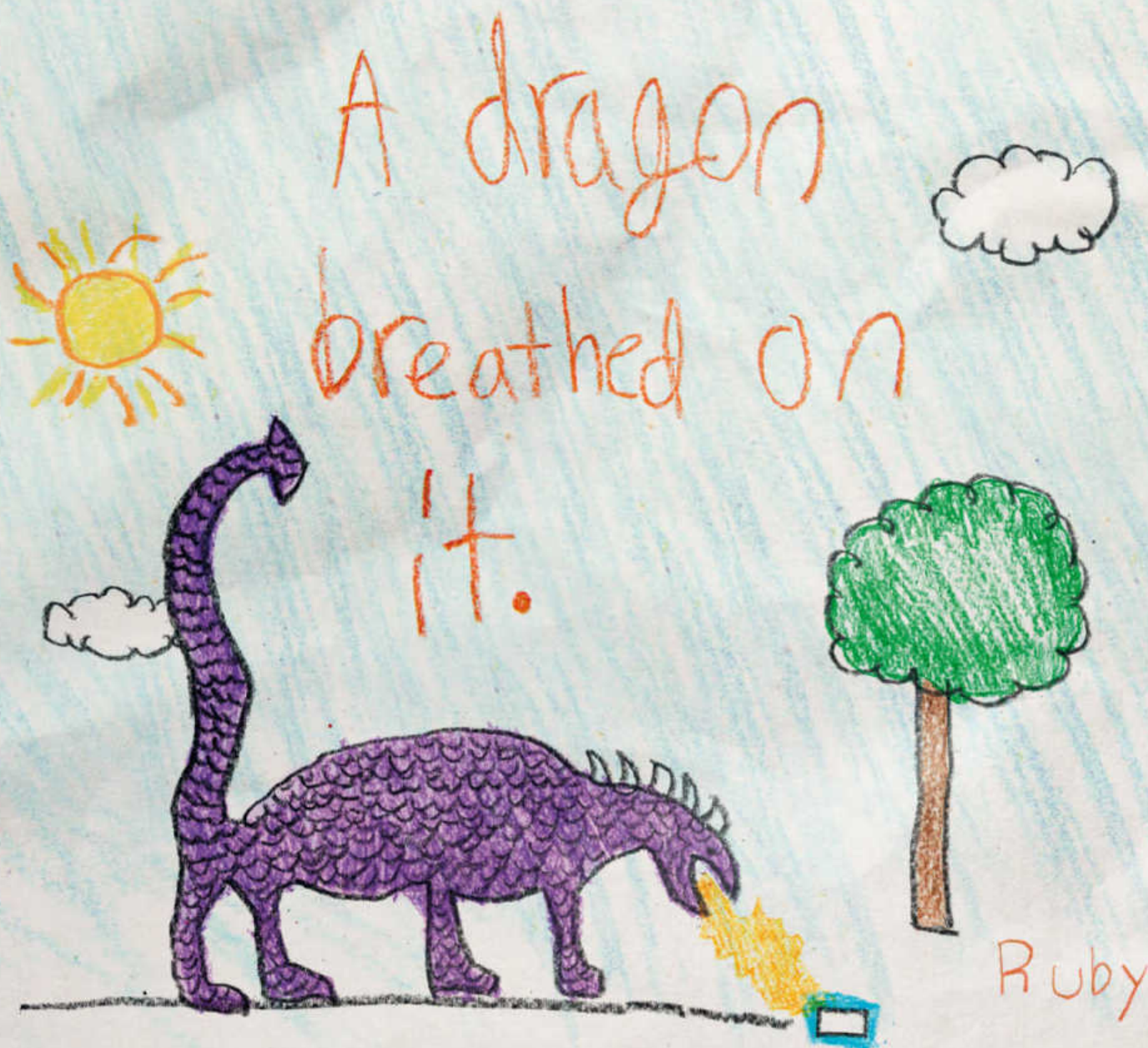
Wrap top, £37,
xs-xl, Benetton

**Feather
bag,** £69,
Phase Eight

**Sequin
trousers,** £150,
6-18, Coast

*Wrap tops
are clever
figure-fixers,
slimming
arms, tums
and busts*

Feature: Helen Johnson



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Beaded
bangle, £17,
Accessorize

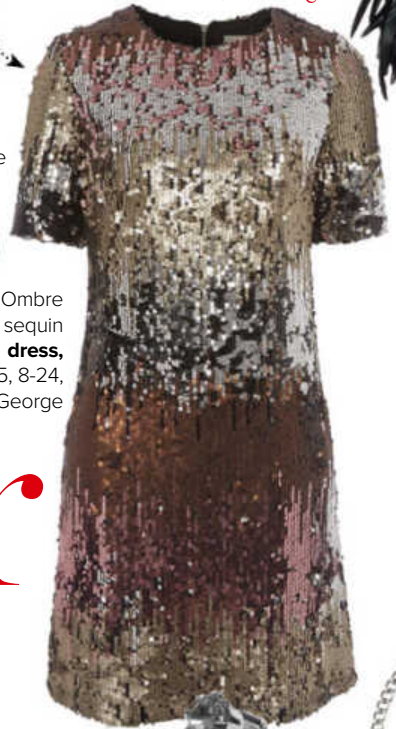


Glitter star
bag, £19.99,
New Look



Embellished **pumps**,
£49, 3-8, Accessorize

*Bring on the bling!
No need to add accessories
with a dress this sparkly*



Ombre
sequin
dress,
£25, 8-24,
George



Jacquard
trousers, £45,
8-18, Wallis

INSTANT glamour FROM £5!

Friends, fizz and fab fashion... Here's our pick
of the best budget party pick-me-ups

*We just love
dresses with
sleeves*

Black lace **dress**,
£45, 8-20, BHS

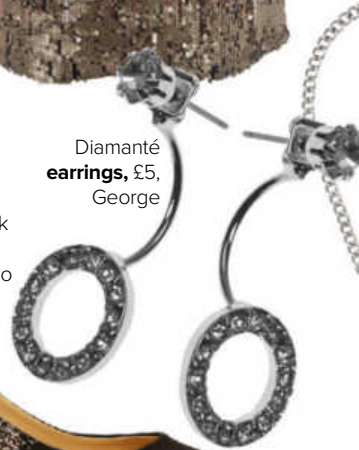


Glitter bar **clutch**,
£12.99, New Look
at Amazon



Gold and black
court **shoes**,
£28, 3-8, M&Co

Diamanté
earrings, £5,
George



Faux fur **collar**,
£35, Cath Kidston



Silver glitter
sandals, £25,
3-8, Very

Jewelled
necklace,
£25, Next



Sequin waterfall **jacket**,
£25, 8-20, Primark

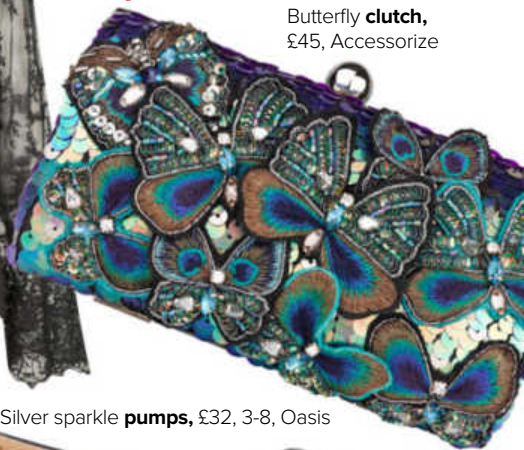
Fashion inspiration



Feather **cape**, £49, John Lewis



Decorative **top**, £50, 14-32, Evans



Butterfly **clutch**, £45, Accessorize

Beaded **skirt**, £50, 6-22, Next



Red **jumpsuit**, £45, 8-18, Wallis



Silver sparkle **pumps**, £32, 3-8, Oasis



Chandelier **earrings**, £12, Accessorize

STYLE IT!
This sequin top will propel an office skirt to standout status in an instant!

Sequin **top**, £29.99, 8-18, New Look



Swap your trusty black trousers for a dressy jacquard pair

Jacquard **trousers**, £42, 8-18, Oasis



Jewelled **clutch**, £45, Monsoon



Beaded **skirt**, £40, 6-22, Dorothy Perkins



Pom-pom court **shoes**, £22.99, 3-9, New Look

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We feminine feathers

We've fallen for feathers in a big way this season. From dress hems to accessories, they're the on-trend way to make every outfit feel showstopping. Work the look in this stunning black dress from the new Elvi Prima Premium Collection – team with heels and get ready for your most glam NYE ever.



ABOVE: **Dress**, £149, 14-26, Elvi Prima Premium Collection.
Feather hairband, £49, Jacques Vert. **Bag**, £19.99, New Look. **Shoes**, £79, 3-8, Dune

Buy it, wear it, love it!



SUGAR-COATED

When it comes to winter, it's what's on the outside that counts. A hero coat, like this one from Almost Famous, will pep up any outfit, and ticks off this season's pastel trend. An investment piece that you'll love for years to come.
Embellished coat, £349, 8-14, Almost Famous

WIN A PARTY DRESS BY GREAT PLAINS

Great Plains is one of our favourite stops for brilliant basics, and lately we've been wowed by its lovely evening wear. Its gorgeous LBDs and swoon-worthy separates are perfect for party season and you'll never feel underdressed again. We've teamed up with Great Plains to offer 3 lucky readers the chance to win a dress of their choice from the collection.

● Enter at prima.co.uk/greatplains by 5 January 2016*

Style solutions from our senior fashion editor
AMANDA MARCANTONIO



Jolly jumpers

The humble novelty knit has officially become a festive must-have. This year, opt for grown-up cashmere, Scandi designs and a sprinkle of sparkle.

Red motif,
£25, s-xl, BHS



Spotty robins,
£49.95, 6-20, Joules



Grey Santa,
£28, s-xl, Marks & Spencer



Sequin stag,
£14, 8-24, George



Navy snowman,
£59, xs-xl, House of Fraser



Raise funds for Save the Children and wear your woolsies on 18 December for Christmas Jumper Day!



Jacquard dress, £95, xs-xl, Great Plains



Red dress, £85, xs-xl, and **necklace**, £25, both Great Plains

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: *Open to UK residents aged 18 and over. Competition closes midnight, 5 January 2016. The prize is for one dress with a maximum value of £150. Prize is non transferable. No cash, voucher, gift card or other alternatives. Three winners will be randomly selected from entries received. Hearst Magazines UK reserves the right to amend T&Cs at any time. See hearst.co.uk for full T&Cs.

Our New Year reinventions

If you've ever felt stuck in a rut, take heart from these four readers who transformed their lives in 2015

'I changed career and achieved a work/life balance!'

For Marcia Robinson, 43, from London, leaving her corporate job to sell bags meant waving goodbye to financial security, but she hasn't looked back.

The moment I knew it was time for a career change was two years ago, when I had to make a work call from the changing room of my son's tae kwon do class. Surrounded by children's clothes, I resented having to talk shop with colleagues in New York, when I should have been watching my seven-year-old son Myles.

My work/life balance needed serious attention. I had a management position in IT training for an investment bank and that meant I was continually on calls across time zones. Myles was the first one to arrive at breakfast club and the last to be picked up from after-school club. I felt guilty constantly.

The job was well paid and I'd worked hard to get there, but while my husband Andrew and I enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle, I knew there was more to me than a corporate role. So, with some trepidation and the backing of Andrew, who works in IT contracts, I left my job in August 2013. While I thought about what to do next, I took on contract work and put some money aside.

Then, only two weeks after I left my job, I saw a bag in a shop in Brighton and it was love at first sight! It was a bright yellow Italian designer shoulder bag with black rope handles, called an O Bag, and I bought it on the spot for £76. I got so many compliments about it from friends and even strangers that I had to find out more. I did some research and found out that the lightweight silicone bags can be put together from a huge range of colours, handles and trims, and this makes them all unique. Even better, a UK franchise of the company was up for grabs.

I talked it through with Andrew. I'd never done anything like this before and, at a cost of £20,000 for the franchise, it was a big investment. But owning the franchise would mean representing the brand in the UK, and I was convinced it couldn't fail. And by November 2014, it was mine!

Last year, in the first week of December, I opened a pop-up shop in a busy part of London's Old Street, where I could test the market. With prices starting at £39, the bags were so popular they flew out the door. I toasted New Year and saw in 2015 with the prospect of launching my own bag shop. It felt like I was on a

roller coaster – scary and exhilarating, but heading in the right direction.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Set-up costs were over £60,000, so it was a huge risk. But when O Bag Factory North London opened on 7 March with an amazing launch party, customers queued up to come in. Journalists and fashion bloggers came to the launch, and I even got coverage in the local press.

People say walking into the shop gives them a happy feeling. It's spacious and painted all white, so the colours really pop. Seeing the shelves full of bags makes me feel proud and excited.

And, although it's a career that's very demanding, I can now take Myles to school, and collect him to go to football practice. My

old, straight-laced corporate outfits remain packed away and I love being able to dress however I like now.

I couldn't be more delighted with my new

career. When you find something you truly believe in, it can change your life. 2015 has been the year when I finally found my true niche and a work/life balance. It's a great feeling.'

• obagnorthlondon.co.uk ➔

'Seeing the shelves full of bags makes me feel proud'



‘Against all the odds, I’ve become a personal trainer’

Claire Lawrence, 31, from Syston, Leicestershire, was registered blind as a teenager and has learned that having a disability won’t hold her back.

Finding out that you’ll lose your sight by the age of 20 can do one of two things: make you give in to self-pity or reach for the stars while you can still see them. I’ve always been a fighter, and receiving the news at the age of eight just fired me up to do all I could in the time I still had vision.

My diagnosis was Autosomal Retinitis Pigmentosa, a degenerative eye condition. Early signs are night blindness and tunnel vision, which explained why I was always tripping over my brother’s Lego.

My parents didn’t wrap me in cotton wool and, despite my deteriorating sight, I longed to be an artist. By the time I started a Fine Art degree, I had 15% vision and was registered blind, but I had enough sight to do the kind of abstract, sensory art I loved. Yet, life wasn’t easy and I went through some very dark days. After completing my degree in 2007, I hit a low patch and gave up on my dreams.

HELPING OTHERS

It was getting an admin job at the RNIB (a charity that supports people with sight loss) that turned out to be a real life-changer. Over several years, I worked my way up to regional campaigns officer. The organisation pushes you to be the best you can be, and my confidence soared as I realised that my disability didn’t need to hold me back.

Although previously married, I now live alone. While I need help with some things, it’s important for me to be independent, and I now use a cane as a mobility aid.

I started 2015 feeling positive about the future so, when I heard about a fitness training course organised by the charity Aspire, I was really excited.

They do amazing work supporting people who have been paralysed by spinal cord injuries, and their aim is to get more disabled instructors in gyms to encourage other disabled people to take up exercise. They offer training for people with all kinds of disabilities and I suddenly thought: “I could do that.” I’d become a bit of a fitness fanatic before my wedding at 24, so I went along to an induction at the gym near where I work and learned how to use the equipment. Now I’m a qualified level 2 gym instructor and a level 3 disability and fitness instructor, allowing me to train people with disabilities within a gym.

One client is in a wheelchair and has a severe spinal injury since having a motorbike accident – he can only move his head, neck and one arm. He does lots of upper body work with me to strengthen his muscles and stay as mobile as possible. He is progressing every day and it’s wonderful knowing that I’m helping him grow in confidence. I’m hoping other disabled clients will think: “She’s done it, so I can do it, too.”

Becoming a personal trainer in 2015 has made me healthier, happier and more confident. And I’ve even taken up art again. I want to show that disability doesn’t stop you doing what you want to do – you just adapt to do it in a different way.

• For more information, visit rnib.org.uk

✦
‘It’s wonderful knowing I am helping people’

'I finally took a grown-up gap year!'

After a life of making sensible choices, Lisa Wheetman, 51, from Warrington, knew it was time to satisfy her wanderlust.

My dream, for as long as I can remember, has been to travel around in a motorhome and wake up thinking, "Where shall I go today?"

I loved poring over travel articles, cutting out the places I dreamed of visiting. But I'd always played it safe, with a steady job, first in HR and then in project management. Work felt like *Groundhog Day* but, for a long time, I ignored my wanderlust.

Then, after a series of family tragedies, it really hit home that life is too short to wait for the right moment. So, after years squirreling away money into my "travel fund", at 48, I bought a white four-berth motorhome on Gumtree. It cost £23,000 and was fully kitted with a shower, loo, fridge-freezer and TV. I called her Tulusa – she was perfect.

I was soon travelling around the British Isles and Europe whenever I got the chance. However, I still didn't feel free. So in March this year, I applied for a sabbatical – and, to my amazement, my manager said yes! After working for the company for 28 years, I had 18 months of freedom with which to explore...

NEW ADVENTURES

I sat down and listed the places I'd always wanted to visit: Mozambique, Portugal, Ibiza... In fact, Ibiza turned out to be the first stop on my adventure, when I booked myself into a retreat with an amazing life coach called Fiona Harrold. A week of detoxing and yoga was a really spiritual experience for me.

That was back in May and, since then, I've hardly sat still. I've stayed in a beautiful villa in Sitges, Spain, with my best friend, went to Portugal for a big reunion, and I've travelled all over Wales, Scotland and the South coast in



my motorhome with my travel essentials – shorts, a vest top, a map and my Jack Russell Dolly! I also gave Tulusa a rest and went on an amazing trip to Mozambique in November. While I was there, I visited some friends, went on a safari and did some scuba diving.

Luckily, I've never been extravagant and my mortgage payments are minimal on my three-bedroom home. I've been saving up for this since my early forties, and my pension is there as a back-up.

Travelling has been everything I've dreamed of, and more. I just love taking

off when and where I want. It's been a type of therapy for me. I used to have OCD and everything had to be clean and in its right place, but that's gone now. I don't even wear a watch or follow a routine. My grown-up gap year has truly transformed me. Friends say

I look younger and less stressed. And they're right – I'm full of energy yet so chilled it's untrue.

I see 2015 as the beginning of my life of adventure.

I have a sense of all these possibilities

that were never open to me before. I no longer feel controlled by everyday life; I'm the one in control of my destiny now.'

'I love taking off when and where I want; it's been like therapy for me'

'I have a new lease of life after divorce!'

Alyson Reay, 49, an entrepreneur from West Horsley, Surrey, was devastated when her marriage ended. But now she's happier than she's ever been.

Coming home from a holiday and looking through the photos was the moment I realised something was wrong in my marriage. My husband's expression as he looked at me in one picture was not the look of love. My instincts told me that he was hiding something, so I checked his phone and, in July 2013, discovered he was having an affair. The news left me devastated; for a while I didn't care if I lived or died.

We'd been together for 17 years, married for 13, and there were many happy times. But when he told me it was over, I collapsed. I couldn't sleep or eat. My hair fell out in handfuls and I was covered in eczema. Eventually, I was diagnosed with acute depression, and went to counselling to come to terms with loving a man I barely knew.

MOVING FORWARD

For a while, I was on a high dose of antidepressants. But, after 18 months of struggling to get through every day, the turning point was moving into my own house in early 2015. I knew the instant I walked through the door that it was perfect for me. It's a pretty four-bedroom semi on a friendly cul-de-sac, and I soon got to know all my neighbours. I loved waking up to the sound of children playing and sitting in the little garden that I soon made my own. I felt so much more relaxed and peaceful than I did in my previous home. I sold the diamond jewellery from my wedding day and boxed up all the photos and sentimental ornaments. Then I surrounded myself with new paintings and glass vases in vibrant colours that made me feel happy,

and got two kittens, Pickle and Penguin, who make me laugh every day.

With my new base, I decided the time was right to take a break, and booked a sunshine holiday to Cancun. Sitting on a lounge at the beach bar, watching the waves crashing on the shore, I finally felt at peace.

I met some lovely people and came back feeling rested, renewed and positive about life.

I even felt strong enough to tackle the final thing I needed to deal with in order to get my old self back – my fitness. So in August, I started working with a personal trainer. At my heaviest, I was a size 18 and I hope to get down to a 12. But I'm already feeling the benefits of my healthier regime – and my friends and family are noticing, too.

They say I look years younger now the stress has gone from my face.

I have used the year to truly nurture myself, doing things I love and enjoy. As a result, I feel completely transformed. I've become emotionally and financially self-sufficient. I'm happy in my work, running my social media company

– Sassy Social Marketing – with renewed confidence. I've also

joined an amazing women's business group called Sister Snog and, after signing up to an online dating site, I've even met someone who

makes me feel good. It's early days, but who knows what the future holds? I've rediscovered myself and my trusting nature is still intact. 2015 has been the year I got my life back.'

• sassysocialmarketing.com

'The turning point was moving into my own house and filling it with colour'



LATTJO indoor range from £5

Come home to play

Hard day at the office? Things on your mind? The solution is more fun than you think. Because the act of playing has been shown to decrease stress and develop problem solving abilities in adults and children. So round up the kids and hop, skip, jump your way to a relaxed evening with the new LATTJO range of toys and games.

'I'm determined to create NEW MEMORIES'

As she faces the third festive season since losing her husband and child in a terrible boating accident, Victoria Milligan shares how she copes and is focusing on making a positive, fresh start in 2016

Victoria's life changed immeasurably in 2013 when she lost her husband Nick and eight-year-old daughter Emily in a speedboat accident in Padstow, Cornwall. Her other children (Amber, now 14, Olivia, 13, and Kit, seven) were injured and Victoria lost a leg. Since then, Victoria, 44, has thrown herself into charity work and is a personal trainer and regular on ITV's *This Morning* and *Lorraine*.

Last weekend, I spent most of Saturday on the sofa with my arms around my children watching Will Ferrell films and eating popcorn. I think we even had cookies for dinner... I used to be the type of mother who organised a day out and, if we spent more time than planned at the playground and didn't get to the Science Museum, I'd feel like a failure. I was always nagging about homework, hair washing and running around like a maniac most of the time. However, you can't help but start to

live in the moment when you have been through a traumatic situation.

Before the accident, life was full of joy and love. I had a husband I adored – I called him Nicko – and four beautiful children. It was as hectic as any family with four kids, but they were young enough that we still enjoyed doing things together. On Sundays, we'd go for long walks on Wimbledon Common, then have a roast.

Once a month, we'd all visit a museum, and bank holidays were spent at our holiday home in

Padstow. Nicko and I knew our life was blessed – and it was, apart from those two minutes when everything changed. Before them, I was a happily married mother of four. Now, I'm a widowed single parent amputee with three children to look after.

The days after the tragedy were like a dream. I've discovered that your body and mind give you only the amount of pain that you can deal with. So just like they made sure that I didn't feel the propeller of the speedboat cut into my leg, they also enabled me to gradually cope with the loss of Nicko and Emily.

One of my lowest points was the ambulance ride to London when I was being transferred to St Mary's Hospital in Paddington after two weeks in Devon. I was coming back home, back to the terrible reality. I cried for the entire three-hour journey. Once there, I looked online for books about grief and ordered them to be delivered to my hospital bed. I was desperate to find a manual that would help me through the pain and show me how to grieve.

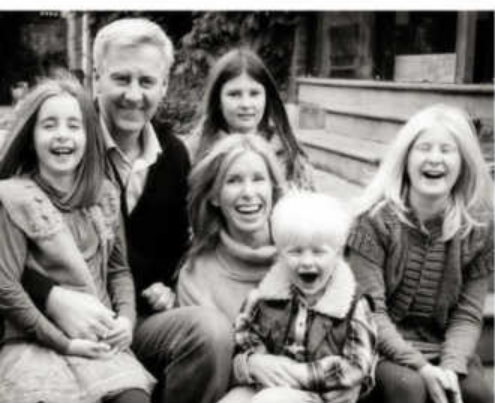
There was nothing that really made the grade, which is why I've started writing my own book. But one story did have an impact – it was written by a woman whose 10-year-old brother died when he fell off a bridge when

she was 12. She said that afterwards, her mother took to her bed and was never the same again, so not only did she lose

'I managed to park my grief and help the kids with theirs'

her brother, but her mother, too. That was when I decided to survive. I felt that what had happened to my children was so unfair and they shouldn't have to deal with also losing me. From then on, however low I was feeling, whenever the kids were around, I managed to park my grief and help them with theirs.

Of course, Christmas is particularly difficult. It's meant to be the happiest time of the year, yet all the family traditions around it just emphasise what we've lost. I feel an enormous responsibility to still make Christmas special for Amber, Olivia and Kit. But



ABOVE: The family, from left: Emily, Nicko, Olivia, Victoria, Kit and Amber



I'm now determined to create new memories. So when friends invited us to stay with them in America for the festive season this year, I decided that we should go. It was a conscious decision to do something completely different.

I tell the children that the worst thing that will ever happen to them has happened already, and I hope they will grow up to be incredibly strong people with a greater understanding of life because of what they have been through. I am so proud of them – we all have our really low and angry moments, but we get through it as a family, talking it out between us. Sometimes, we just need a good hug and a cry; there isn't anything to say.

OUR NEW NORMAL

Losing a partner and a child are very different losses and I cannot grieve for them both at the same time. Things can trigger the sadness when you least expect it. Finding Emily's half eaten jar of peanut butter in the cupboard or Nicko's comb in the bathroom can stun me, and I'll collapse on the floor sobbing.

My friends and family have been incredible. Their support, and Child Bereavement UK's counselling, has ensured that I faced my grief head-on without antidepressants or sleeping pills. I also realised it was important to eat well and exercise. It would be easy to open a bottle of wine, but hangovers and grief don't mix!

The future doesn't look as black as it did this time last year, but I've learned that you can't plan too far ahead, so now I'm only comfortable with planning a few months in advance. 2016 will be a busy year, as we're moving house. It will be a positive new start. The new house will be crowded with photos of Nicko and Emily and, while I would give my other leg to get Nicko and Emily back, we have to live our new reality, our new normal.'

• Victoria is the patron of Child Bereavement UK, and she blogs and gives advice on how to deal with bereavement at victoriamiligan.co.uk



Victoria has thrown herself into charity work

even if I were to make the house more festive, the tree bigger and buy more presents, I can't give them what they want the most.

We used to choose our tree from the local garden centre in the first weekend of December. Invariably, I'd like the first one I saw and Nicko would disagree. Then, after looking at tree after tree, we'd end up buying the first one! Our first Christmas after the accident, we went to my mother's in the Wirral, but I can't really remember

it. Last year, the thought of getting a tree and decorating it without

Nicko and Emily was unbearable. But it seemed even sadder to not have one. This is where friends are invaluable, as they can help when small tasks seem enormous. A friend chose a tree and brought it over, then we decorated it while laughing over how Nicko – who had a touch of OCD – would be "advising" us on where to put each bauble. Somehow, without forcing it, it became a happy event.

It started with a New Year's kiss!

This time of year can be the perfect moment for romance, as these four readers explain

'He drove for two days to spend New Year with me'

Virginia Macgregor, 35, from Crowthorne, Berkshire, knew that her husband Hugh was the man for her when he showed her just how far he was prepared to go for her one New Year.

When you first fall in love with someone, you want to be with them every second. So in 2010, three months after I met Hugh, I flew out to my godmother's house in Switzerland for Christmas and counted the hours until Hugh would join me in Geneva for New Year.

But then the snow started to fall. It didn't stop, so all the flights were cancelled. I had to face up to spending New Year's Eve without Hugh. I was devastated.

We'd got together after I'd started working at the school Hugh worked at. I was the bookish English teacher who played by the rules; he was the cool drama master who loved to challenge them. But it soon became clear we were making up lots of reasons to spend

more time together. And, a month into the term, we were falling in love.

To be separated on New Year's Eve – by the weather, of all things – seemed cruel. The best idea was just to keep busy, so I helped my godmother prepare for her celebrations that evening. Then the doorbell rang. There, exhausted, crumpled and beaming in

the fading afternoon light was Hugh. After a moment of shock, I threw my arms around him in the cold winter air.

It turned out that he had driven for two days to get to me in Switzerland. I remember thinking, "Only a very special person would do something so incredible."

That night, the two of us walked to a snowy clearing in the forest. At midnight, there was no music, no fireworks,



just Hugh and me. It was the start of a very special year. We got engaged the following spring and married in December 2011. Eighteen months later, I was pregnant with our daughter Tennessee.

Hugh helps me be the very best version of myself I can be. Without his belief, I wouldn't be living my childhood dream as an author, with my second novel out shortly. Driving 700 miles to tell me he loved me was amazing, but being by my side every single day since is even better.'

• *Virginia's novel, The Astonishing Return of Norah Wells (Sphere, £14.99), is out 14 January*

‘I kissed his friend first!’

Joanna Miller, 46, and her husband Craig’s romance got off to an unusual start, as Joanna, from Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, explains.

New Year’s Eve came around fast, and I wasn’t in the mood for partying. I’d recently moved to Oxford to do a teaching degree and had broken up with my boyfriend. I probably would have just curled up under my duvet if my friend Charlotte hadn’t taken pity on me and invited me out.

She knew four guys who were visiting for the evening, so a group of us, all in our early twenties, headed out to the pub. After a couple

of hours, I realised that, despite myself, I was actually having a great time. The only thing I had noticed about Craig was that he seemed to like my friend Emma and, as midnight chimed, I ended up sharing a New Year’s kiss with one of his friends.

‘That night changed my life; thank goodness I didn’t stay in!’

The next day, when we all met up again for a New Year’s Day breakfast, Emma decided she wasn’t interested in Craig. She asked me to distract him so she could chat to someone else and that was how we were first thrown together.

It took a while for “us” to happen, but there was something about Craig, with his confidence and can-do

attitude, that fascinated sensible, risk-averse me. After a few months, we were boyfriend and girlfriend. He swept me off my feet with his old-fashioned manners and charm.

The group from that night became an inseparable band of friends. Emma was bridesmaid at our wedding



Joanna & Craig



three years later and, 20 years on, both she and Craig’s friend I kissed at midnight are now godparents to two of our three children!

I know that without that New Year, my life would have been totally different. Every single one of the people from that evening are still in our lives now. Many featured in a rhyming speech I read out at our wedding, and now, with Craig’s unfailing support, I have my own business creating funny personal rhymes and gifts (bespokeverse.co.uk). That night changed my life in so many ways. Thank goodness I didn’t stay in and sulk!

Special relationships

'He proposed on New Year's Eve!'

Jenny Harrington, 43, from Uppingham, Rutland, threw caution to the wind when she met Chris, also 43.

Waking up on New Year's Day 2014, I had the most incredible feeling of happiness.

And then I remembered... "Morning fiancé!" I murmured sleepily, stretching out a hand to the man by my side.

The evening before, Chris and I had chosen to stay the night in a hotel,

just the two of us, to see in the New Year together. We'd cuddled up with Champagne and strawberries, and I burst into tears as he

proposed to me with a stunning ring.

It was the end of a whirlwind year.

My marriage had ended a couple of years earlier, leaving my self-esteem shredded. With two young children,

Megan, then seven, and Josh, two, I decided to try internet dating, but didn't hold out much hope.

But in March 2013, I spotted Chris on the dating site eHarmony. His photo was very natural and he sounded like a genuine guy, so I sent him a message.

We then began to chat on the phone, and became close very quickly. So

much so that when we first met, three weeks later, I blurted out that I loved him. I couldn't help myself, even though I was terrified

I'd scared him away. Once my words sunk in, a couple of days later, he asked me and my children to move in with him. My friends were flabbergasted, but, two weeks after that first meeting, I found

'After meeting online, we became close very quickly'



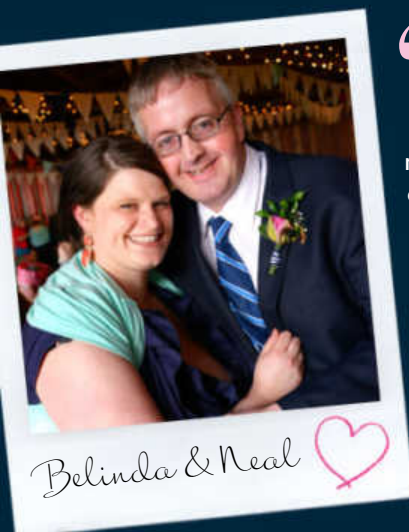
myself in a new home 150 miles away with my new boyfriend.

Nearly three years on, there are six of us: me, Chris, Megan, now nine, and Josh, four, as well as our baby Eliana, who is nearly one. Chris's daughter Lexi, six, stays at weekends and is also right in the centre of our happy family.

To mark that whirlwind year with our engagement was perfect. We married three months later, in March 2014, a year to the day after I'd impulsively told Chris I loved him.'

'I knew it was worth taking a risk for Neal'

After an intense festive romance, American Belinda Bobko, 34, now living in Wrexham, North Wales, found that not even 5,000 miles could get in the way of love.



Finding Neal's sock on my apartment floor was enough to start the tears rolling. It was a chilly January morning in my apartment in Seattle, on America's West Coast, and that sock was all I had left of my boyfriend who I'd kissed goodbye at the airport a few hours earlier, after a wonderful holiday seeing in the New Year together.

We'd met in a New York bar in 2010. I'd been in the city on a work trip while Neal, now 41, was there on holiday. We hit it off immediately – even though I'd never heard of a place called "Wales", which this kind, relaxed man called home.

We went our separate ways but, three days later, he emailed. Then, a gorgeous bouquet of flowers arrived on my birthday, along with an indecipherable card, which an internet search revealed said "Happy Birthday" in Welsh! We were soon emailing, calling or Skyping every day. The distance made us braver and we were very open and

honest with our opinions and feelings. After all, we had nothing to lose.

Six weeks after New York, Neal flew out to Seattle for a whirlwind 48-hour visit. It sounds crazy – our friends and family certainly thought so – but it was like we'd been dating for months. Telling each other we'd fallen in love felt natural. Living on the other side of the world made it terrifying, but I knew he was worth taking a risk for.

A month later, Neal came out for the festive season. When we shared our first kiss of the New Year, I knew our future was together. A month later, Neal proposed via Skype. He'd planned to do it in person, but simply couldn't wait.

We married near my home in Washington State in May 2012 and, two weeks later, I arrived in Wales. I had five suitcases and a wonderful husband, but no job or friends. I started a blog (foundlovenowwhat.com) as a way of telling people back home what was going on with my life. Now it has followers all over the world.

Neal and I have been together for three years. Although I still get homesick, Neal is my anchor. I don't care where I am as long as I'm with him.'

'When we shared our first kiss, I knew our future was together'



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FERRERO

Learn to say no... it's such a positive word!

Bestselling author Cecelia Ahern talks candidly about how being a mother has inspired a New Year's resolution that will resonate with us all

Irish novelist Cecelia Ahern, 34, has written 12 novels, including *P.S. I Love You*. Her bestselling books have been read by 22 million people worldwide and several have been adapted for the big screen. She lives in Dublin with husband David and their two children, Robin, six, and Sonny, three.

Holding my little daughter's hand while she hopscotched merrily down the pavement during a fun weekend in London recently, I felt a New Year's resolution forming inside my mind. It is all about embracing this precious time while my children are at such an important age and about paring down my life to make as much time for them as possible.

Don't get me wrong: from the moment they were born, they've been my number one priority. But that day in London, with Robin asking a million questions and noticing everything, when I'd normally have been on my own whizzing between appointments, barely even able to say if there was rain or sunshine, was an eye-opener.

I thought to myself that what I want is more of these experiences, and to be able to enjoy life at my children's pace when I'm with them. Before, my husband David and I would go for a walk on the beach and it would be over in a few minutes, but with kids, they want to look at everything. I think this encourages us to start living in the

moment. And part of this is about taking on less and being prepared to say no to certain things. "No" can be such a fabulous, powerful, positive word, and one I vow to use more in 2016.

In my twenties, I was so anxious to give my career 100% of my energy that I found it almost impossible to say no to anything. There were no boundaries about when or where I'd work.

But, when Robin arrived, I took a year of maternity leave. I knew instinctively as a mother that my children would need my full attention, and not a mum who would sit there daydreaming about her characters or running off every time an irresistible paragraph occurred to her.

So, when I went back to work, I made sure I had an office outside the house and a strict 9 to 5 routine, four days a week. That way, I could close the door on my work and clear my head before I arrived home.

It's as if having children has made me more assertive, more of a grown-up. Becoming a mother has given me a confidence that I didn't have when I was younger, when I suffered from crippling and unexplained panic attacks that would come on suddenly in social situations and that drove me indoors and into a period of real introspection.

Having children forces you to deal with different social scenarios and, in my case, it's made me stronger and tougher. That confidence has also given me the assertive streak I need when it comes to saying no.

Before this small miracle took place, I'd often feel obligated to say yes to everything. Now, increasingly, no means no and I'm much more likely to ask myself: "Will this be beneficial, or am I just doing it to please others?"

Of course, I do still want to challenge myself – writing is my therapy – but, at the same time, it's liberating to know that no one needs to work 24/7 to be a success. If you put value on your time, establish boundaries and are disciplined, you tend to achieve so much more.

There is, of course, a lot of pressure on working mothers these days – we want to achieve 10 out of 10 in every area of our lives. We want to be brilliant homemakers and wives and nurturers, filling our children's lunch boxes with healthy food and baking cakes for the school fête, while still going forward in our careers. It can make you feel like Sabrina, the heroine of my latest novel, who juggles her work as a lifeguard with looking after her three small children. She can breathe perfectly under water, yet feels she's drowning in her life on dry land. If only she could know that it's okay to let some of the balls drop. If only we *all* could. It's a lesson I'm working hard on in my own life.

I tend to start a novel every January, deliver it in June, edit it in the summer and promote it in the autumn. For the last two years, I've also written two novels for young adults and have two TV films going into production. So yes, I'm still busy but, at the same time, I feel calmer now than I ever have. My New Year's resolution is about hanging on to that sense of calm and balance.

'It's okay to let some of the balls drop. That's a lesson I'm really working on'

‘I want to be able to enjoy life at my children’s pace when I’m with them’

It may help that I have also begun to build recuperation time into my schedule. December is not exactly a month off – I’m usually plotting my next novel in my head. But there’s no travel,

no promotional work and not much physical writing either. My family really does get the best of me at this time.

It means that I can have the kind of Christmas that I love with my husband and children, and enjoy the huge family gathering that we all look forward to. When I say “huge”, you have to bear in mind that my mum is one of 11 siblings and my dad is one of five, so there are cousins, aunts and uncles galore!

Come January, I’m always ready to attack work afresh and I tend to get more done than at any other time of the year. I have no regrets about being a working mother – I love going home at the end of the day and I do feel now that there is balance between my work life and my home. And my New Year’s resolution can only increase this.

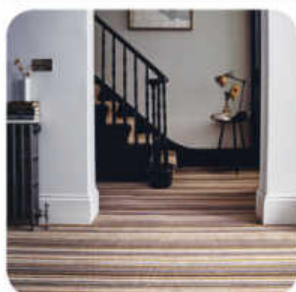
Robin already has opinions about her mum working. There are times when I’ll be going off to my office and I’ll say, “Oh, I wish I could just stay here with you today and play.” And she’ll say, “But, Mummy, if you do that, nobody will be able to read your books. Now off you go!” I’m so happy she’s learning about life’s precious balancing act.’

• *Cecelia’s latest novel, The Marble Collector (HarperCollins, £16.99), is out now*



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My festive survival kit

There's no doubt about the medicinal qualities of Chardonnay, but knowing its limits is key, says comedian Jenny Éclair

How important is white wine when it comes to my festive survival kit? Well, it's not the first thing I reach for in the morning – that would be bad. But, at 8pm, when I've had my bath and I'm in my pyjamas, it's time for a treat...

It normally comes in the shape of a couple of glasses of iced Chardonnay (I'm very, very fussy about how chilled my booze is). Chardonnay was very big during the Bridget Jones years and then, suddenly, it went out of fashion.

I say that drinking something naff is fine, as long as you really do like it – there are lines that must be drawn. I won't drink just anything. I've had to walk out of dinner parties and trek miles to the nearest off-licence when all that has been on offer is a disgustingly sour Sauvignon Blanc.

Now, Chardonnay is for every day. Chablis is for special occasions... or when someone else is paying. But that can have its own pitfalls. I once went to a neighbour's Christmas Eve party; he was a generous host who kept a very good Chablis and I think I drank *all* of it. On Christmas Day, I felt so rough and irritable, I ended up having a huge argument with my sister-in-law. I was then sent out of the house and ordered to walk around the local golf course in disgrace. I have never, ever done that again – it's a cautionary tale. Alcohol can be like petrol: incendiary.

There's no doubt that the medicinal qualities of Chardonnay increase tenfold around this time of year. But, while it's an anaesthetic when family descend on you, it's like any medication – the important thing is not to overdose. I'm older and wiser now, and know that

if you start drinking too early on 25 December (when you're still unwrapping presents), you end up throwing that little bit of expensive jewellery into the fire with the wrapping paper because you're too tipsy to know what you're doing.

And then there's New Year's Eve. I don't do New Year's Eve. I don't like the pressure to have fun. It's fine when you're young and you don't mind not

'It's a cautionary tale. Alcohol can be like petrol: incendiary'

being able to get a cab home from a party in the early hours, and think walking for five miles with blisters or sleeping on someone's carpet is hilarious. But it gets to a point where that isn't fun, and you need your bed.

And I really, really want to wake up clear-headed on 1 January; it doesn't

bode well to begin the year badly. I'm horribly superstitious; if I start the year hungover, I reckon I'll end it in the gutter. So on New Year's Eve, you'll find me at home in front of the TV. I stay in with my partner Geof and just about make it to midnight for the fireworks.

Geof watches them live from the roof of our London home (you can just see them if you lean quite far out), but I reckon an even worse way to start the New Year than being hungover is to fall off the roof, so I watch them on telly from the safety of my beanbag.

This is a good time of the year to count your blessings. I don't want it to end in tears, vomit and broken limbs, so I try to behave. And I do find HRT very helpful. In fact, I might just double the dose of that rather than crack open another bottle of Chardonnay!

• Jenny is touring the UK with her show *How To Be a Middle Aged Woman (Without Going Insane)*; jennyeclair.com



‘We’re the party people!’

Meet the women who’ve made businesses out of making us eat, drink and be merry

‘Just call me the canapé queen!’

Emma Benson, 50, runs a party catering company from her home near Newbury in Berkshire.

Bustling around a party with people laughing and chatting, I feel proud that I help to make celebrations the best they can be with tasty party food.

I’ve always loved cooking and, in my twenties, spent most of my money hosting fancy dinner parties and trying out recipes. My mother was a fantastic cook who always managed to stay calm, which made me believe you can entertain people without stress.

But I never thought my passion would be anything more until I needed some extra money for my three children’s after-school clubs and trips. We had language students to stay to bring in extra cash, and I’d make up lunches with cantucci biscuits – Italian biscuits with pistachios and cranberries. Everyone said how nice they were, so I thought, “Why not make a few to sell?”

In 2003, I set myself up as a sole trader and got a food hygiene certificate for £75. I bought striped cellophane bags, stuck on labels saying “Mrs B’s Kitchen” and filled them with biscuits. I sold them at Christmas fairs for £4.50 a bag.

From there, things branched out to picnic hampers filled with salmon and cold chicken, and then a regular weekly job of making lunches for partners at a local solicitor firm, charging £10 to £12 a head. I did some Christmas party catering and took on weddings, too.

Five years ago, with the kids getting older – Esme, now 20, Max, 19, and Verity, 15 – it seemed the right time to take things to the next level. I joined a business networking group called Athena for £240. I was so inspired hearing about other women’s work at their monthly talks that I decided to scale up and take on more parties. Having to say out loud what I was planning made me stick to it.

I set up a website using a template for £150 and I splashed out £650 on some heavy duty equipment like a Magimix.

I also bought beautiful bread baskets and made sure I had nice platters for canapés (TK Maxx has some great bargains!).

Luckily, we have a large kitchen and, by using the shed for storage, I have plenty of space to prepare the food.

With the website and some social media

support for £150 a month, I began to get more work, and I’m now busy every day. I spend around £1,500 a month on ingredients. People are getting more adventurous, for example, plates of sushi have become so popular. I have hundreds of cookbooks that I read for inspiration, and the TV is constantly tuned into the Food Network.

I love helping people plan really bespoke parties, charging around £1.50 to £2.50 per canapé and £3 to £5 per

‘I couldn’t think of anywhere I’d rather be than in the kitchen’

person for a bowl of food. While I do most of the preparation at home, I put on the finishing touches at my customers’ houses before the events start.

Last summer, I did a fun party for a real Francophile. She had a marquee in her garden decked out like a bistro, with red checked tablecloths and waiting staff in striped tops. It was like we’d all been transported to Paris.

Christmas is my busiest time of the year. I love planning festive menus that feature fragrant tagines or little spoons of mulled wine spice ice cream.

It’s hard work and I usually cope by making lots of lists! Things do go wrong – sometimes a dish gets dropped or you run out of something – but you just have to work around them. A party isn’t a party without food and I can’t think of anywhere I’d rather be than in the kitchen.’

• mrsb.kitchen ➔



EMMA'S TIP:

- You don't need to buy expensive equipment when you start out. Save that for later when you have some more disposable income.



‘I love to blast out festive beats!’

Helen Andrews, 45, runs a DJ business with her husband Nik, 51, based in Wolverhampton. The couple have two sons, Samuel, 19, and Jamie, six.

Music has always been important to me, but marrying a DJ meant he was the professional in the family. But then, during one particularly busy Christmas season, Nik needed help. Two rooms in a Walsall hotel both needed a DJ. He would do one, but who would do the other one...?

“You should give it a go,” he suggested. “You might enjoy it.”

I was nervous, but agreed to try. Nik programmed the computer so all the tunes were there and, as Mariah Carey’s *All I want for Christmas is You* boomed out on to the dancefloor, I felt like I was getting the hang of it.

When we got home, I was on such a high that I agreed to help at the next five Christmas hotel parties. I loved when people said they enjoyed my playlists.

In the New Year, I went back to my part-time job as a school receptionist. But, when someone asked Nik if he did children’s parties, he suggested I give it a go. So we set up Rug Rats Disco,

spending £1,500 on a new laptop and lights, and upgraded the equipment.

We advertised through Facebook and our website, and business took off quickly as word got around with local mums. I started end-of-term discos at local primary schools, charging £80 for two-hour parties. As I love music, it really wasn’t a hardship keeping up with chart music children like to hear.

It wasn’t until five years ago that I decided to make DJ’ing my full-time job. The time felt right to do something that fitted better around the family.

Now I DJ at a variety of parties for adults and children, from work events

to New Year’s Eve celebrations and wedding anniversaries,

charging £220 from 7.30pm to 12am.

I have some general pre-set playlists for different occasions, but I also take requests and I’ve developed an instinct for what sounds good together. Children love anything from *Frozen*, while adults want *Uptown Funk* and, at this time of year, everyone loves a bit of Mariah!

We’ve kept innovating, and now include photos of the evening as part of the experience. We take pictures of guests arriving and going wild on the dancefloor and stream them on to TV screens by the decks.

Being a DJ can be hard work – I can

leave for a job at 5.30pm and arrive home at 2am – but it’s a lovely way to meet people. And you do see some funny sights, especially at this time of

year, when everyone’s indulged in a bit of Christmas spirit. One New Year’s Eve party ended up with a group of blokes doing *The Full Monty*!

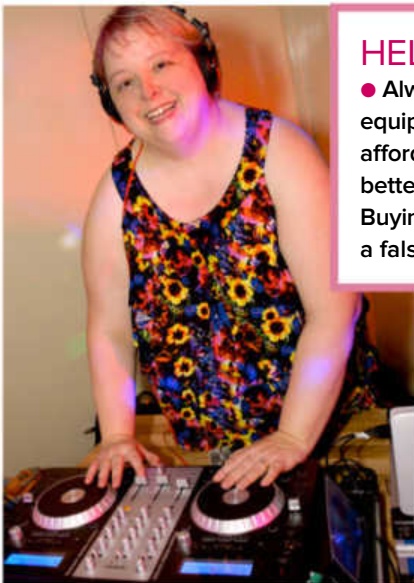
The songs you only hear at this time of the year are a central part of the festive experience. I’m glad I can inject that special sound into the parties I work at.

• helensroadshow.co.uk

‘I enjoy keeping up with chart music’

HELEN’S TIP:

● Always buy the best equipment you can afford as it will sound better and last longer. Buying cheap can be a false economy.



‘Shaken not stirred? No problem!’

Jenny Stewart, 41, and her sister Brenda McKissock, 44, from Livingston, West Lothian, run a mobile cocktail company.

Standing in the kitchen, dressed in my black tasselled flapper dress, I breathed in the gorgeous scents of cinnamon and clementines as I rustled up a festive cocktail. It’s a typical party scene, although sadly the drink isn’t for me!

I’ve always loved entertaining, and my sister Brenda and I were used to mixing up Mojitos and Cosmopolitans in my kitchen. When I was made redundant in 2013, it was while chatting with friends (over cocktails, of course!) about the possibility of starting some kind of a business, that our idea came about.

“This is what you should do!” a pal laughed, pointing at her glass.

After a bit of joking, we realised she had a point. There weren’t any local bars that served proper cocktails and

‘We chose a 1920s theme as it was the golden age of cocktails’

so we began to investigate how to set up our own company.

We loved the idea of high quality cocktails using fresh ingredients combined with the best spirits and mixers, made and served by us in customers’ homes. It would mean that people could have a fun night in with delicious cocktails without the cost of a taxi fare or babysitter. And, because we’d clear everything up afterwards, the party host would never know we’d been there!

We chose a 1920s theme as it was the golden age of cocktails and, as well as serving drinks, we decided to arrive in flapper gear and tell fun stories about the Prohibition era.

Setting up a Facebook page for The Vintage Cocktail Company, we priced



Sisters Jenny (far left) and Brenda

JENNY'S TIP:

● Focus on your customers, and remain upbeat and positive. You have to believe in your product and yourself.

up our packages: the Taster (three cocktails per person) at £15 each, and the Standard (five cocktails per person) at £20 each.

After researching recipes online and devouring cocktail books, we invited our friends and family over for a taster party. Everyone dressed up and we served five different cocktails – including a gorgeous pink Mary Pickford laced with rum, pineapple juice and Maraschino liqueur – and asked for feedback. Everyone loved it!

In April 2014, we went on a training course to get our liquor licence and bought some stylish glassware to go with our own strainers and shaker: 12 Martini glasses, 12 Margarita glasses, 12 tall glasses and 12 short ones, all for £650.

Three months later, we had our first real booking – a combined graduation and birthday party. We were thrilled but nervous, too: what if people didn't like our act or the cocktails we served?

Luckily, Brenda and I are both very outgoing and the nerves soon faded

as we threw ourselves into the parties. And, as we booked more jobs, we began to reinvest in the company, spending £1,700 on a laptop,

business cards, more glassware and some fun props such as photo frames and fans for our guests to play with.

By Christmas, business was booming, with three or four parties a weekend. We soon learned that most people love a strawberry Daiquiri!

Our weeks are busy as we both work full time in call centres – our business meetings are often while walking the dogs! Luckily, our supportive husbands, Colin and Stuart, both 45, are happy to stay at home with the children (I have two children – Molly, 12, and Daisy, nine – and Brenda has three – Lauren, 16, Nathan, 14, and Robyn, nine) when we're working at the weekend.

At the moment, we're focusing on reinvestment, and are saving up for a professional mobile bar so we can make our parties even more glitzy. We love the look on people's faces when they



taste a delectable cocktail. Christmas is all about spirit and sparkle, and nothing says that more than a good cocktail.'

BRENDA SAYS: 'I studied art and used to work in a cocktail bar in the 1980s, so being involved in the business gives me a chance to unleash my creative side.'

We love looking online for cocktail inspiration and, now our palates are developing, we're much better at creating our own cocktails from scratch, too.

It's great working alongside my sister. We can say anything to each other but we're careful to make sure we don't take each other for granted.'

• thevintagecocktailcompany.co.uk

Simple ways to keep life sweet

Here are some key things you can do to soothe fractured bonds and strengthen ties with your nearest and dearest

This time of year is all about having fun, but family tensions bubbling away under the surface can reach boiling point. While the number of people asking lawyers about divorce soars in January, it's also the month when more people want to patch up their relationships. Relate, which offers relationship and family counselling, saw an 18% spike in calls to its helpline last January compared with the rest of the year. Here are some expert tips so your celebrations go without a hitch...

1 Take time out to unwind

The cocktail of high expectation, financial pressure, stress and different generations spending time together can lead to many families emerging in January more woe than ho ho ho. 'This time of year can be the straw that breaks the camel's back,' says relationship counsellor Denise Knowles. 'Niggles that you've buried all year can burst into the open.' But forewarned is forearmed. Acknowledge the tensions and make sure that you build in some time for yourself, such as going for a walk or meeting a friend.

2 Control your feelings

When relatives make your life stressful, tell yourself that you can't be in control of what they do or say. However, you can be in charge of how you deal with it, whether it's at that moment or any other time during the year. 'If old wounds are reopened, take a deep breath and count to 10,' says Katharine Hill of charity Care

for the Family. 'If someone upsets you, realise that they may not have intended to say what you think you heard.' Ensure things don't spiral out of control. 'You may have to wait weeks to talk about it, but then calmly address whatever was said,' says Katharine. 'Take responsibility for your part and forgive, if possible.'

3 Talk, and listen

If you want to arrive at Christmas 2016 with family ties that are stronger and more resilient, keep the lines of communication open. 'That's the cornerstone of any relationship,' says psychologist Dr Becky Spelman. 'So many of us clam up, or are false or ambiguous in what we say or do, and this leads to confusion, frustration, and sometimes pain.' Denise adds that as well as talking honestly about how you're feeling, the way to communicate better is to listen better, and then to 'respond without judgement'.

4 Call your relatives

Find time to work on your ties with other family members; it's often when we feel disconnected from each other's lives that tensions can arise. 'Resolve to be in contact with your mum, dad or sibling regularly,' says Katharine. 'Be interested in what is going on in their lives. It might not sound exciting to you, but it is important to them.' Making an effort to call on a specific day of the week will help you keep that particular relationship in mind. Remembering special days – birthdays, poignant anniversaries or a first day at a new school – is always appreciated and helps others realise how much you care.

'Don't get trapped in routines – do something fun with your family this Christmas'

5 Have fun together

The family that plays together, stays together. As Becky says: 'Christmas is a great time to get everyone together, but it shouldn't be the only time this happens. Do this more regularly and the spotlight won't shine with such intensity on just one high pressure

time of year.' Snapping at the kids is a sure sign you need more fun in your life, says child psychologist and parenting expert Dr Claire Halsey. 'We all get trapped in routines, but to avoid life feeling like one long chore, do something together: go outside, play a board game or do some cooking.'

6 Discuss values

It might sound odd, but talking to the kids about what values you live by can give you a real blueprint for future family life. 'Perhaps choose three words, like loyalty, love and fun,' says Claire, and then make a fancy design to hang up where everyone can see it. 'Have a family meeting and ask for suggestions on how you're all going to have fun together.' Ask what tweaks could improve family life, too. Maybe you want them to tidy their room, or they'd like more praise when they've done things right. Listening to everyone and then making small changes can make a big difference.

7 Harness teen spirit

'Often, our children get older but our parenting style doesn't change,' says Claire. 'Ask yourself whether your teenagers actually know what's expected of them. Once they know, they'll thrive.' While it's tempting to let grumpy teens stay shut in their rooms, bringing them into the conversation will make for a happier family life. 'Teenagers like to feel consulted,' says Claire. 'Asking them where the next family holiday should be or what time is reasonable to expect them to go to bed will make them feel valued.' And you may get fewer slammed doors as a result.

8 Stay on track, all year round

While resolving to strengthen family ties is a great resolution for the New Year, like any big promise to yourself, it needs revisiting on a regular basis. 'Keep asking yourself what is working and what is not,' says Denise. 'Don't wait until little niggles build up again into something big to sort it out.'

Keep the love alive



FIND 10 MINS A DAY

For many couples, children, money worries, running a home and balancing work all add to the strain. 'Prioritise each other,' says Denise. 'Even if you can only find 10 minutes every day, it will make a difference. Putting a "date night" in the diary is a great idea, but it's the other small, regular stepping stones that really make couples closer.' Simply turning off your phones for the evening or heading to bed at the same time, instead of one person coming in when the other is asleep, helps togetherness.

AIM FOR INTIMACY

When it comes to our sex lives, over half of us are dissatisfied*. Relate surveyed 6,000 people and, in the previous month, only half of them had made love. But is sex really that important? In fact, says Denise, being intimate is just as vital as actually having sex. Lingering kisses, snuggles and holding hands are all part of the magical glue that keeps the most solid partnerships together.



Beauty for grown-ups EASY TWEAKS TO FEEL *fresh* faced!

It's that time of year when you can be on your knees – but you don't want your face to give away just how shattered you're feeling, says expert Kazia Pelka. Here, she reveals how not to look tired

Admit it: this is the time of the year when most of us are feeling – and looking – exhausted. But it's also the time when we're seeing lots of friends and family and want to be looking our most gorgeous. Tiredness shows itself mainly in the eyes and complexion. And, even more annoyingly, puffiness is exacerbated by too much salt and alcohol! But help is at hand – here is everything you need to get back to your fresh-faced best. Most tips and treatments only take a few minutes, so combine with a quick lie-down, before heading back to the madness!

THE PROBLEM: **Red eyes**



SOLVE IT! Black eyeliner is one of those wonderful things when you're looking your best. However, right now, a very dark navy works wonders – the cooler tone gives the appearance of brighter, whiter eyes.

- The skin around the eye may look pink, adding to the tired look. Use a highlighting concealer pen close to the lashes and in the inner and outer corners of the eye socket before applying eyeshadow to restore a fresh appearance.
- Complete the bright-eyed look by lining the inside rim of your lower lashes with an off-white or nude eye pencil.



THE PROBLEM: Make-up sits badly

SOLVE IT! The grey colour of the sky makes your skin look duller and more tired in the winter months. To combat this, opt for darker shades of eyeshadow and lipstick, which will counteract the effect and contrast beautifully with a paler winter complexion.

- Add a radiance-boosting primer under your make-up and set with a little powder. Keep the formulation as fine as possible, to balance the effects of the winter light.

GREAT BUYS



Dior Diorskin Airflash CC **Primer**, £30, Boots

Delilah Pure Touch Micro-fine **Loose Powder**, £42



Laura Mercier Matte Radiance **Baked Powder**, £25, Space.NK

THE PROBLEM: Dark circles

SOLVE IT! I have three brilliant ways to kiss goodbye to dark circles, all of which work wonders...

- Place a couple of teabags in a little warm water and leave for a few seconds. Squeeze, chill and then apply to eyes for 5 to 10 minutes. The caffeine will shrink the tiny blood vessels, which can be seen through the skin giving a dark appearance, to make the area appear brighter.
- Pop a slice of chilled organic potato over each eye and leave for 10 minutes. Potato contains a skin-lightening enzyme that helps to improve the appearance of dark circles. It targets puffiness, too.
- Soak a couple of cotton pads in chilled full-fat milk, squeeze and apply to eyes. The fats and lactic acid in the milk can help reduce dark shadows.



GREAT BUYS



Clarins **Eye Revive Beauty Flash**, £29



Darphin Ideal Resource **Anti-dark Circle Eye Illuminator**, £39

GREAT BUYS

(L-R): Charlotte Tilbury **Rock 'n' Kohl Liquid Eyeliner Pencil** in Marlene Midnight, £19

MAC Studio **Chromagraphic Pencil**, NC15/NW20, £14

Urban Decay Naked 24/7 Glide-On **Double-Ended Eye Pencil** in Naked Basic, £12.50

Smashbox Photo Op Eye Brightening **Mascara**, £19.50





THE PROBLEM: Puffy eyes

SOLVE IT! Swap heavy eye creams for lighter, cream gel formulations. Keep them in the fridge for added soothing benefits. Apply with your ring fingers using tapping motions to avoid dragging the delicate skin. Also, try one of the following quick tricks. I love them – give them a try and see which one works best for you...

- Put 4 teaspoons in a glass of cold water with 2 or 3 ice cubes. Take turns at gently rolling the curved sides over and around the eyes, replacing them in the water to re-cool.
- Keep a bottle of rose water or witch hazel in the fridge and apply to cotton pads, placing one on each eye for a few minutes.
- Place a chilled slice of organic apple over each eye. It will be cooling on the eye and the pectin from the apple has an antioxidant action, which will help reduce puffiness.
- Sleep with your head elevated. This will promote better circulation and prevent fluid from collecting around your eyes.

GREAT BUYS



StriVectin
360°
**Tightening
Eye Serum**,
£52, Look
Fantastic

Origins
No Puffery
**Cooling
Mask
for puffy
eyes**, £24

Clinique All About Eyes Serum
De-Puffing **Eye Massage**, £24

Mini face massage

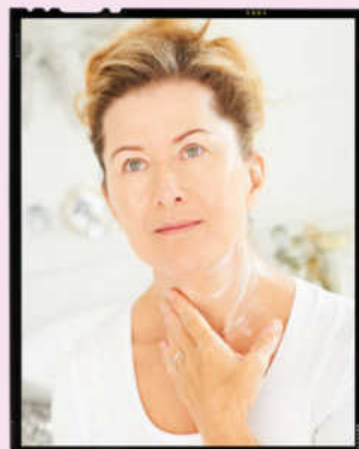
Wake up your eyes with this easy massage, which targets tension and puffiness. It will also have the benefit of helping to drain congested sinuses.

- Using ring fingers, stroke from either side of the nostrils along each side of the nose up to the inside of the eyebrow. Finish with 3 tiny circles of massage to the inner brow.
- Place your ring fingers on the inner corner of your eyes (where the tiny raised bone is). Press and release very gently 8 times.
- Move to the indent between here and the inside of the brow

bone. Again, press and release very gently 8 times.

- Using alternate strokes and a little more pressure, ease the muscles between the brows.
- Use gentle circular pressures along the length of the brow and repeat several times.
- Take the ring fingers back to the inner corner of the eyes and repeat the second step.
- Roll and lift the pads of your ring fingers along the orbital bone below each eye toward the temples. Finish here with some gentle circular massage. Remember to roll over the skin, don't drag. Repeat several times.

THE PROBLEM: Lacklustre skin



SOLVE IT! Revitalise tired-looking skin by exfoliating. No time? No problem! Simply sweep an exfoliating toner over your face, neck and décolletage.

- I use a mask as often as I can, and vary them for different requirements. Leave a mask on overnight for maximum benefits, taking it over your neck and décolletage (avoid the eyes) so that skin is party ready.
- Having a night in? Take off your make-up and massage an oil into your skin for a few minutes. The massage will increase the circulation for added radiance. Let the oil sink in over the evening and then follow with your regular night cream for maximum hydrating effect.
- Want to look fabulous for a special event? Try Roloxin Lift Revitalising Face Treatment, £79, Beauty Bay. It reduces the appearance of wrinkles, fine lines and pores. The effects last 12 hours and yes, it works!

GREAT BUYS

Origins Calm To Your Senses
Stress Relieving **Face Mask**, £30



Botanics
Organic
Facial Oil,
£9.99,
Boots



Clarins Gentle
Exfoliator
**Brightening
Toner**, £25

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To welcome a new year full of endless exciting possibilities, Saks is offering Prima readers 25% off* hair and beauty with its expert stylists and therapists.

Saks is all about making women feel special, with a gorgeous new collection of beautiful looks for glam girls and style setters. Choose to bring out IRRESISTIBLE YOU with a head-turning new cut and colour.

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2 January to 28 February 2016, mentioning this offer – take this page along to your appointment.



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

*25% off valid on selected hair and beauty services with selected staff on selected days at participating Saks salons from 2 January 2016 to 28 February 2016. Mention offer at time of booking and take this page to appointment. Contact your local salon to find out if they are participating. Not valid on homecare, gift vouchers, UV tanning or clinics and cannot be used with any other offer. Services may vary from salon to salon and are subject to availability. Only original pages will be accepted – photocopies are not valid. No cash alternatives will be offered.

Style your hair glam!

Want the perfect 'do for all those festive celebrations? Perfect party hair is easier than you might think

Your go-to kit for great hair

In a rush? No problem! With these speedy tricks, you'll have party-ready hair in a jiffy!

Fringe benefits Hair washing takes up valuable minutes. 'If you have a fringe, simply wash that part of your hair and then blow-dry it into the rest of your style,' says stylist Rosie Tappin from Trevor Sorbie Brighton.

Speedy re-style 'Dampen your hair with a styling spray to help reshape it,' says Rosie. Try **Trevor Sorbie Styling Blow Dry Mist** (£5.70, Boots). Then ditch the hairdryer in favour of **BaByliss Dual Big Hair airstyler** (£60, Boots). It's a spinning brush with two heat settings for a smooth volumised blowout, without the need for a full wash and blow-dry.

Do battle with frizz 'Always use an oil before blow-drying and really work it into the frizzier parts of your hair,' says Rosie. We love **Redken Diamond Oil Glow Dry** (£32.50, Look Fantastic), which makes hair easier to style and quicker to blow-dry, too. 'Once you've finished blow-drying, blast the hair downwards with cold air to set the style and stop frizz from occurring.'

Hair refresh Dashing from desk to dance floor? Keep a hair perfume handy to revive end-of-day hair. **Sachajuan Protective Hair Perfume** (£40, Urban Retreat) gives shine and moisture to frazzled strands. Or mist a blusher



brush with **Percy & Reed Eau My Goodness Shine & Fragrance Spray** (£22, Look Fantastic), and sweep over the surface of dry hair for a finish that radiates shine.



Accessorise all areas

Adorn your festive style with a hair accessory. 'Less is more,' says Andrew Jose from Salon Science. 'A statement dress needs simple hair. But a simple gown lets your hair become more of a statement.'

Boho vibe Want low-key hair? Simply blow-dry it sleek and add this eye-catching **Head Chain** (£12.50, Dorothy Perkins) for a party flourish.

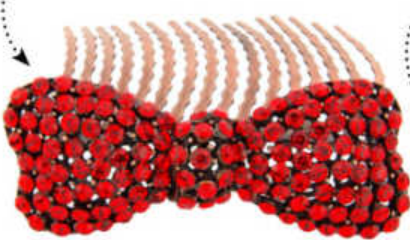


Grecian goddess

Curl your hair into soft waves, gather front sections into a low-slung twist and pin at the back. Add a gilded band like this **Gold Leaf Statement Alice Band** (£19, Accessorize).



Comb-over Add glitz to your updo with a sparkly comb. For a retro vibe, try this **Fifties Siren Hair Comb** (£30, Glitzy Secrets).



The Great Gatsby Sweep shorter hair into a 1920s sleek side parting and fasten with a sparkly clip like this **Blush Beauty Hair Clip** (£16.50, Glitzy Secrets).



Easy tricks for hairstyles that last all night long

For hair that looks just as good at midnight as it did at the start of the party, Andrew Jose reveals his secrets for style longevity...

Wash in advance Always wash your hair the day before. This stops it from being difficult to handle and sliding out of its style. Use lightweight products, such as **Salon Science Celluluxe Swiss Apple Shampoo and Conditioner** (from £15 each, Boots), that won't weigh your hair down or make it too slippery.

Styling hero Dry shampoo is a must-have for volume and staying power. Section hair off with clips and spray a line of dry shampoo. Wait for a few minutes, then brush through with a soft bristled brush to evenly distribute the oil-absorbing powder. We love **Bouffe Dry Spray** (£5.99, Boots),



which thickens flat hair a treat and comes in six shades to blend easily with your hair colour.

Master back-combing Essential to combat flat hair disasters. Working in small sections all over the hair, use a comb or soft bristled brush positioned at the mid lengths of the hair and gently but firmly push the hair back towards the scalp down to the root in one fluid motion.

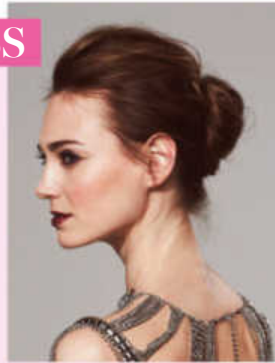
Take it slow Great hair takes time – *don't* rush it! Practice makes perfect, so trial your style the day before to get it right on the night.

SOS kit Always carry bobby pins, a brush and a handbag sized can of hairspray, so you can fix on the go!

MASTERCLASS

How to do the textured chignon

A classic bun is a fail-safe party look and is so easy to do yourself. Headmasters ambassador Jonathan Soons explains how to create the style in five simple steps.



1 Texturise

Wash hair and then, while it's still damp, prep with a texturising spray like **L'Oréal Professionnel Wild Stylers Scruff Me** (£14.99, Feel Unique), to give your hair a bit of bulk. Then blow-dry it using a round, natural bristle brush to plump up the roots while smoothing the ends.



2 Wave it

Use a large curling tong and wave your hair away from the face, pinning each curl with a grip as you go. Once hair has cooled down, remove the pins and brush out the waves.



3 Tease

Starting at the front of your head, take small sections of hair and use a bristle brush to tease the roots, leaving the ends smooth.



4 Pin

Using your fingers, rake the top section of your hair back; pin below the crown. If your hair feels too smooth, increase texture at the root by adding a little

texturiser to fingers while you rake the hair back.



5 Twist

Take the side sections of your hair, pull back (as if doing a ponytail) and twist the hair like a rope until it naturally pleats back on itself. Pin; wiggle the pins as you do this so the hold is stronger.



Have a very gorgeous New Year

Four readers model the party looks that'll inspire you to see in 2016 in style

Pretty as a prom queen



BEFORE

Jonita D'Souza, 31, is a women's lifestyle coach and lives in London.

GET THE LOOK

- This beautiful dress oozes glamour for a showstopping occasion! The silhouette and luxe material give it a vintage feel – making it a timeless investment piece that will never date.
- The square neckline of this dress is so flattering because it acts as a frame for the face. The midi length, with its statement volume and nipped-in waist, works for all body shapes – you'll look slimmer and taller in an instant! Team with sparkly heels and a bold necklace.



Jonita wears:
Dress, £195; **necklace**, £50, both Coast.
Heels, £60, Ravel.
Inset: Feather cape, £22, Debenhams

Add a nude feather cape for extra style points



FINISHING TOUCH

We used the beautiful **Mavala Nail Polish in Chicago** (£4.75, John Lewis) on Jonita. The perfect shimmering metallic brown to match her dress.

It's all in the detail



BEFORE

Helen Hall, 49, lives in Leeds and works for the council.

GET THE LOOK

- The feather-trimmed trend that's hot on the high street will send you soaring in the fashion stakes! It's fun and flirty, and one great new buy, like this fabulous top, can update your party look in an instant.
- Don't underestimate the power of a pair of killer skinny jeans! Team with a statement top and a cracking pair of heels and you're ready to party!



Prefer a dress? The detail of this one-sleeved number will wow a crowd



FINISHING TOUCH

Recreate Helen's smouldering smoky eyes with the **Mary Kay City Modern Eye Colour Palette in City Sophisticate** (£16). Pop the gold in the inner corners to really open up your eyes.



Helen wears:

Top, £60, Coast.
Jeans, £19.99, New Look.
Bag, £55, Savannah at Debenhams. **Heels**, £24.99, New Look.
Inset: Dress, £89, Phase Eight. **Bag**, £19.99, Next.
Bracelet, £15, Oasis

A little black magic



Karen Sharp, 38, works in publishing and lives in Dartford, Kent.

GET THE LOOK

- A black jumpsuit is the modern equivalent of the little black dress – they're so easy to dress up and down, everyone should have one on stand-by for any occasion.
- The wrap lace detail of this beauty gives it an extra on-trend appeal, and the adjustable ties mean you can wear it as loose or as fitted as you like. Genius!



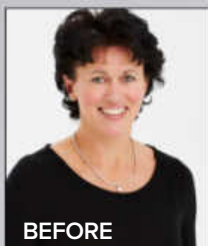
FINISHING TOUCH

No time for a salon appointment? Give your hair some TLC before an event with a great hair mask. We love **Redken Blonde Idol Mask** (£22, in hair salons) on hair like Karen's, as it strengthens and adds shine.



Karen wears:
Jumpsuit, £99, Elvi Prima Premium Collection. **Cuff**, £10, M&Co. **Heels**, £44.99, Next. **Inset: Dress**, £129, Elvi Prima Premium Collection. **Bracelet**, £15, Wallis

Sparkle in sequins



BEFORE

Lorraine Stanton, 51, is a weddings manager from Windermere, in the Lake District.

GET THE LOOK

- An embellished jacket is a great investment for an evening wardrobe, as it's the one piece of clothing that can dress an outfit up or down – the key is to buy it in a neutral shade so it goes with everything.
- Sequin pieces can be found in most shops at this time of year. However, for this season's twist, look out for fabulous patterned styles.



Lorraine wears:
Jacket, £239, Almost Famous. **Dress**, £34.99; **heels**, £24.99, both New Look.
Inset: Dress, £50, Very. **Choker**, £19.99, H&M

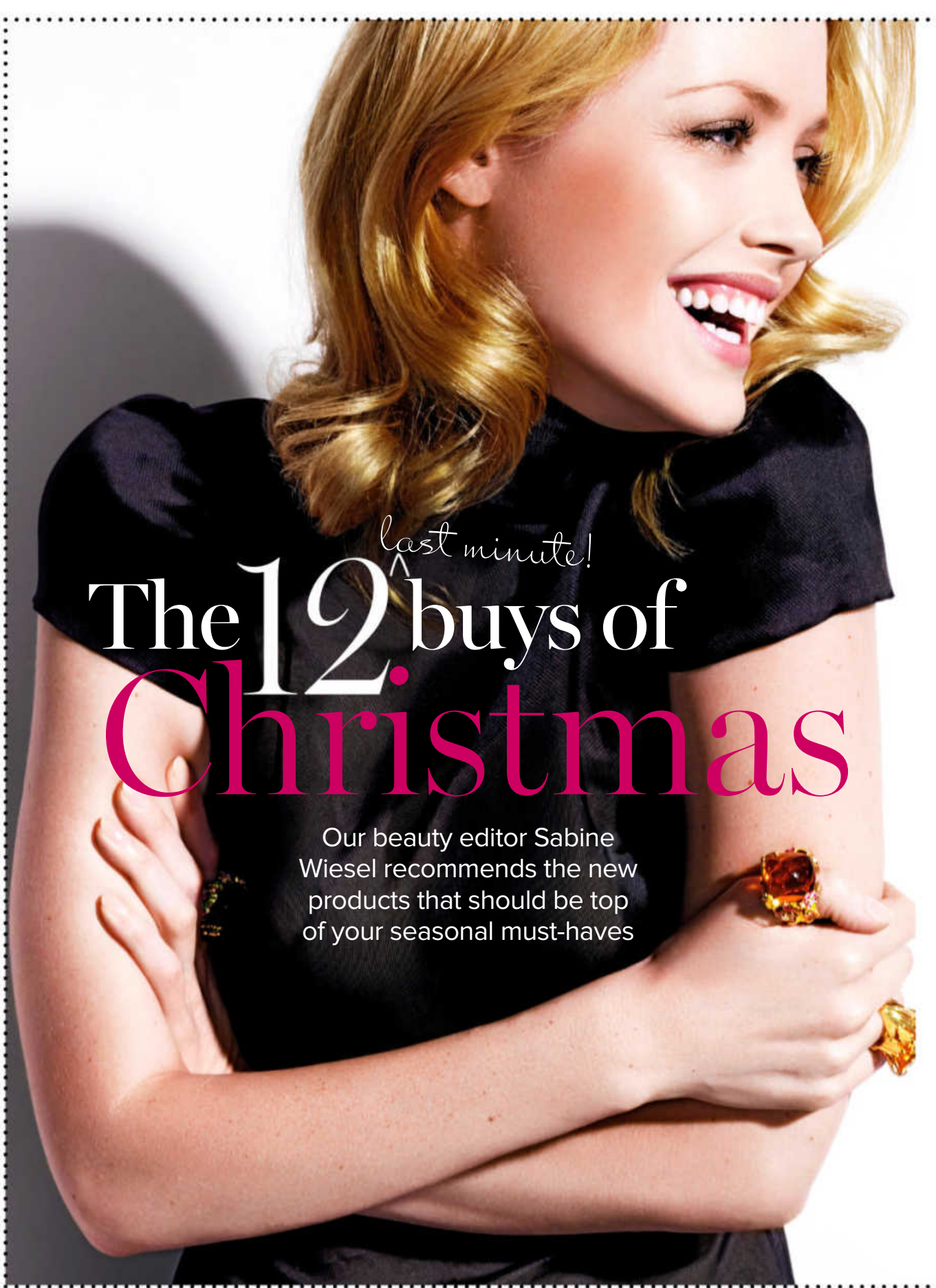
We also love this two-tone dress – team with a statement choker for extra sparkle



FINISHING TOUCH

We chose pink lips for Lorraine.
Bourjois Rouge Edition in 41 Pink Catwalk (£7.99, Superdrug) is a beautiful suit-all fuchsia with a red undertone – a great alternative to a red lippy!



A close-up, profile view of a woman with blonde, wavy hair, smiling broadly. She is wearing a black, short-sleeved top. Her arms are crossed, and she is wearing large, ornate rings on her fingers. The background is a plain, light color.

The ^{last minute!} 12 buys of Christmas

Our beauty editor Sabine Wiesel recommends the new products that should be top of your seasonal must-haves



BUFF THAT BODY

Treat your body to a great scrub, focusing on those areas prone to dryness, like the elbows, shins and heels. I love the **Frank Body Original Coffee Scrub** (£11.95). Just like a latte wakes you up in the morning, this scrub will truly revitalise your skin. It's long had a cult following overseas, and is finally available in the UK. Hurrah!



WIPE IT AWAY

The main beauty commandment is never go to bed with your make-up left on. Yet so many of us still do it at this time of year and our skin suffers for days after – pore size increases, lines appear deeper, skin becomes dehydrated and blemishes pop up from nowhere. If you're a sinner, keep a packet of **Simple Kind To Skin Cleansing Facial Wipes** (£3.25, Tesco) on stand-by, so you don't forget, no matter how tired you are.



POWDER POWER

To get your skin ready for any photo opportunity and keep shine at bay, don't skip the powder. Even if you don't think you suffer, you'll be surprised what the camera picks up. We love the **Bourjois Limited Edition Illuminating Java Rice Powder** (£9.99, exclusive to Feel Unique), which has a beautiful festive shimmer.

GET LIPPY

There's nothing more instantly beautifying than a sweep of the right lipstick. Brown is the new 'in' colour, so pick one of these gorgeous shades for an on-trend look...



From top: **Bourjois Rouge Edition Lipstick Brun Bohème 05** (£7.99, Boots). **Daniel Sandler Matte Lipstick in Audrey** (£13.25). **Mesauda Milano Diva Lipstick in Charlizé** (£7.95). **Lancôme Shine Lover Lipstick in 286 Unconventional** (£21). **MAC Matte Lipstick in Antique Velvet** (£15.50).



FAKE A GLOW

A complexion booster like **Embryolisse Smooth Radiant Complexion Immediate Anti-Fatigue** (£24.99, exclusive to Boots), is an ideal skin pick-me-up when you're back-to-back with party invites. Apply before your make-up to get your glow back.



OIL CHANGE

Wipes are great to use every now and then, but the skincare gurus will tell you how important it is to double cleanse in the evenings so your products work more effectively. Get into the habit of using a great oil to remove the day's make-up, like the brilliant new **Elizabeth Arden Ceramide Replenishing Oil** (£25). It's a really effective make-up remover. Then, simply use your favourite cleanser for a deeper clean.



BRUSH UP ON BLUSHER

Nothing perks up a tired complexion like a flush of colour. I've said it before and I'll say it again – everyone over the age of 30 should be wearing it! The fabulous new YSL Beaute Fusion Ink Blush (£35, available from 26 December) is the easiest to apply as it glides on like a gel and dries like a stain. One to buy before the New Year party.

BEAT THE BREAKOUT

It's the season of indulgence and, consequently, unwelcome breakouts. Meet any blemishes head on with one of these weapons!



SAVE: Eau Thermale Avea Cleanance Anti-Blemish Kit (£20, selected Boots stores)

8



SPLURGE: Murad Anti-Aging Moisturizer for Blemish-Prone Skin SPF30 (£42) and Murad Advanced Blemish & Wrinkle Reducer (£45)



GET READY FOR YOUR CLOSE-UP

Make Up For Ever Ultra HD Foundation (£29, exclusive to Debenhams) was developed for make-up artists to use on actors for HD TV. It uses the tiniest light-reflecting particles and provides flawless coverage.



DIY FACIAL

Save on the salon trips and invest in an at-home facial. Yoso Pro 3 Step Deep Cleansing System (£149.99, Feel Unique) draws out impurities and allows moisturiser to absorb deeper. It's a bit of a splurge, but why not make it a last-minute addition to your wish list!



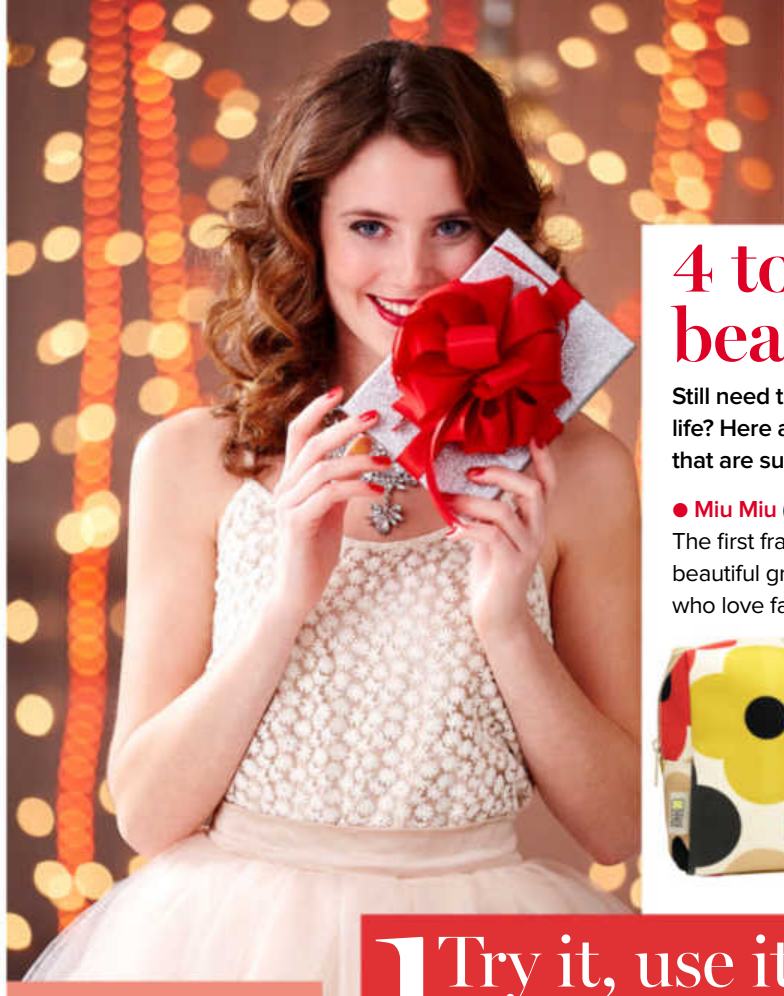
MASK A LATE NIGHT

Korean beauty innovations have taken the UK by storm and one of the latest is the sheet mask. These cut-out paper cloths may make you look like you're an extra in a horror film, but they're packed with skin-boosting ingredients. My fave is When The Last Choice Sheet Mask (£25 for 4, Birchbox).

SEEING RED?

If your complexion is prone to redness, all the festive frolicking does little to help! The new Recover Correct and Conceal Red (£28) is a beautiful cover-up that uses yellow-based pigments to neutralise red tones in the skin. And for a foundation, go for Clinique Redness Solutions Makeup SPF15 (£25).





BEAUTY SOS



Q I've been over plucking my eyebrows for years, and now they're too thin and have gaps. I've bought a serum to get them to grow, but are there any temporary solutions to use in the meantime?

Helen Matthews, Potters Bar, Herts

A The Lola Long Lasting Brows (from £25, Lash Perfect) is a brilliant new salon treatment that builds the shape, volume and thickness of the brow. It uses a multi-layering sculpting technique with a specially formulated gel and pigment powder mixture to create a colour unique to you. And it lasts around 3 weeks. Try it!

Photo: Camera Press

4 top picks for beauty addicts!

Still need to shop for the beauty lover in your life? Here are some brilliant high-street finds that are sure to put a smile on her face...

● **Miu Miu** (from £48 for 30ml, Debenhams). The first fragrance from the designer label is a beautiful green floral – the perfect gift for those who love fashion almost as much as beauty!



● **Orla Kiely Giant Flower Geranium Essentials Kit** (£26, John Lewis). How gorgeous is the queen of retro's new wash bag set? Divine!

● **Elizabeth Arden Silver Swarovski Limited Edition Eight Hour Cream Lip Protectant** (£20). I can't resist the sparkle on this limited-edition version of my favourite lip balm.



Try it, use it, love it!

● **Palette London's Create Your Own Nail Paint** (£25, Boots).

Blend the five colours in this kit together to create every shade imaginable. Genius!



WIN... A HAIR MAKEOVER WITH RICHARD WARD

What better way is there to start a new year than with a new look! And lucky Prima readers have the chance to win an appointment with celebrity and royal hairdresser Richard Ward – famous for Kate Middleton's beautiful wedding 'do! He's offering three lucky readers a complete hair makeover. Richard and his team will colour, cut and style your hair in his Chelsea salon in London, and you'll star in a future issue of Prima.



For a chance to win, send an email to prima.beauty@hearst.co.uk by 3 January 2016 with an image of your hair as it looks today, along with your age, address and telephone number.



PAIN RELIEF

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Always read the label.

Deep Relief

From the makers of DEEP HEAT

www.deep-relief.co.uk

A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a bright red, off-the-shoulder, ruffled dress, stands in a modern, brightly lit room. She is looking at her reflection in a large mirror. The room has light-colored walls and a grey tufted ottoman in the background.

The 3-day super-fast superfood diet!

Want to shift a few pounds, de-bloat your tum and maybe claim back your waistline in time for those parties? It's a killer, but our diet will do the biz!

The run-up to Christmas and New Year is fun, but stress and less-than-perfect eating can create havoc with your waistline. If you need to de-puff quickly and safely, our fun and fabulous diet, created by ace nutritionist Rick Hay, is the one to try. All you need is a blender to pull it together. 'This born-in-a-blender diet is so on-trend,' says Rick. 'Featuring juices, smoothies and soups, the low-GL liquids are nutrient-dense with fat-burning extras that help you to feel satisfied. Most people have a blender and the new high-speed versions have the gift of making the less than tasty, well, tasty!' ➔

The 3-day diet rules...

Unlike most diets, ours has very few rules. Okay, it doesn't look like filling food but trust us, the dishes really are satisfying.

- **FIRST THING:** A glass of wake-up juice
- **FOR BREAKFAST:** A superfood bowl or smoothie
- **MID-MORNING:** A fresh juice
- **FOR LUNCH:** A fibre-rich soup
- **MID-AFTERNOON:** Another fresh juice
- **FOR DINNER:** A chunky bean soup

Plus, drink as much water as you like.
If you fancy a hot drink, make it herbal or green tea. Choose from:

- Peppermint or spearmint, for good digestion
 - Green or matcha tea, for fat burning
 - Dandelion, to help reduce bloating
- And that's all, folks!



'These dishes are really satisfying and can help you reach your weight-loss goals'

Your 3-day diet recipes

Wake-up juice

'This gets the gall bladder firing and kick-starts digestion,' says Rick. 'You could warm the juice gently, if you like, but definitely no microwaving!'

- Juice 1 grapefruit, 1 lemon and 1 lime into a jug (you can use a juicer or an old-fashioned hand squeezer). Mix and then pour into a glass.



Superfood breakfast bowl

'This is a really filling breakfast that will see you through the morning,' says

Rick. 'If you need some extra energy, add a teaspoon of baobab powder. It's a superfruit superfood that is bursting with vitamin C.'

- ½ cup of oats
- 2tsp chia seeds
- 200ml warm rice or coconut milk
- A handful of raspberries or blueberries
- ½tsp cinnamon, to regulate blood sugar

Add the oats and chia seeds to a small bowl. Cover with the warm milk, then add the berries and cinnamon.

Satisfying breakfast smoothie

'Much better than skipping breakfast, the added protein powder or oats in this smoothie will keep you fuller for longer and so will the protein in the banana,' says Rick. 'Don't count the calories as the ingredients are low GL, which is the better way to go for sustained weight loss.' Blend together...

- 1 banana
- 1 cup of berries
- 200ml unsweetened almond, rice, coconut or semi-skimmed milk
- ½ cup of oatmeal or plant-based protein powder

Remember to sip slowly and enjoy!



Chickpea and spinach soup

'It's a great idea to make soup in a blender, as this creates a phytonutrient powerhouse that will stimulate lymphatic function and encourage weight loss,' says Rick. 'But heat slowly on a hob, not in a microwave – that would result in empty calories.'

- ½ can chickpeas
- 250-300ml water
- 1tsp turmeric
- 1tsp cayenne
- Dash of paprika
- A little garlic or ginger (optional)
- Black pepper and sea or rock salt
- 2 cups of washed spinach
- Shredded cabbage or carrots (optional)

Blend the chickpeas with the water. Add the turmeric, cayenne and paprika, plus the garlic or ginger, if you like. Season with black pepper and salt. Pour into a pan and gently heat on the hob, simmering gently for a few minutes. Add the spinach and, if you'd like your soup to have a bit of a bite, add a little shredded cabbage or carrot. Stir for a minute and serve. Delicious!



WHY IS IT A NO TO MICROWAVING?

'Eating foods as close to nature as possible is a very good idea,' says Rick Hay. 'When you use a microwave, many of the phytonutrients and enzymes are reduced. My advice is to always heat food gently on a hob.'

YOUR DIET EXTRAS...

● Baobab powder

A superfruit powder that's big in vitamin C. Add it to your smoothies for energy. Try: Superfoodies Baobab Powder, £10.91 for 100g, revital.co.uk.

● Chia seeds

A source of healthy omegas, chia seeds expand in liquid so are good for the gut. Try: The Chia Co, £4.89 for 150g, nutricentre.com.

● Protein powder

Bursting with amino acids and more, protein powder gives smoothies a healthy oomph. Try: Sun Warrior Blend Natural, £24.99 for 500g, planetorganic.com.

● Flaxseeds (or linseeds)

These are a great source of omega 3 and taste nice mixed with berries or nuts. Try: Linwoods Milled Flaxseed & Goji Berries, £6.49 for 425g, hollandandbarrett.com.



Fresh juices for snacking

Rather than going for the coffee and biscuit snack mid-morning or mid-afternoon, choose a fresh juice instead.

'This really helps with any hunger pangs,' says Rick. 'But remember to sip the juice, don't gulp it down!'

MID-MORNING HUNGER-BUSTER

This juice is ideal if you're feeling a rumble in your tum. Blend together...

- 1 apple
- 1 cup of spinach
- A little ginger
- 200ml water

AFTERNOON PICK-ME-UP

This will definitely see you through the 4pm chocolate craving! Blend together...

- 1 pear
- 1 cup of melon
- ½ cup of kale (or salad greens)
- 200ml water

Remember to sip these juices slowly.



Bean and veggie soup

This really hearty bowlful works perfectly as an evening meal. 'Using pulses in soup is a great idea as it ups the fibre content

and protein levels to increase that

feeling of fullness,' says Rick.

- 1 can tomatoes or 4 fresh tomatoes
- 1 small courgette
- 1 small carrot
- 1 small onion
- 250-300ml water
- ½tsp each of black pepper, dried oregano, thyme, marjoram and basil
- A little rock salt
- 1 can kidney or butter beans

Blend the tomatoes, courgette, carrot and onion with the water and seasonings. Pour into a pan and heat slowly for 5 mins (do not boil). Once almost ready, add the beans and allow to stand on the hob for 1 to 2 mins with the heat off before serving.

HURRAH – IT WORKED! WHAT NEXT?

'Although this is a three-day weight buster, it can be safely used moving forward,' says Rick. 'The soup/juice combo is healthy and helps with digestive function. You could do this diet two or three days a week until you reach your weight-loss goals.'

• Rick Hay is an anti-ageing and fitness nutritionist. For more, visit thesuperfoodist.com



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*Compared to the leading brand, percentage varies across line-up.

**Based on average consumer loading.

†377 UK shoppers surveyed, Sep '14 - Jan '15

Sarah's surgery



Dr Sarah Brewer, GP and expert in complementary medicine, answers your questions

Help with scars

Q My teenage daughter has a scar on her cheek following a playground accident six years ago. It's still quite red, despite her using silicone sheets at night.

Are scar preventing oils worth trying?

A I've found success with Bio-Oil (£8.99 for 60ml, pharmacies) – rubbed directly into a scar, it helps it to fade. There are two new products worth looking at. Remescar Silicone Scar Stick (£19.99, Boots), creates a transparent silicone film over the scarred area, so can be worn throughout the day (unlike silicone sheets that are difficult to use on the face during the daytime) and also contains SPF15 UVA and UVB protection. The other evidence-based product is Solution for Scars (£18.99, scienceofskin.com), which limits the inflammatory response that causes the redness in scars. Developed by a plastic surgeon and a wound-healing scientist, it is based on natural green tea extracts.



Keep winter colds at bay

Q I seem to get at least one really bad cold each winter. Is there anything new on the market that is effective in preventing them?

A You might want to try one of the latest mouth sprays. The new antiviral mouth spray ColdZyme (£9.99, pharmacies) has clinical

evidence to support its effect against the viruses that cause common cold symptoms. It works by forming a protective barrier in the throat, which traps viruses and prevents them from binding and entering cells where they can multiply. Research from Imperial College London found that the spray reduced the virus load among infected individuals by more than 99%, compared with the placebo. In those who did develop symptoms, the time the symptoms lasted was reduced from six and a half days to three days. I also swear by a herbal remedy called pelargonium, which has an antiviral action (eg Kaloba, £9.18, schwabepharm.co.uk).

Coil removal

Q My Mirena coil was fitted at a family planning centre more than five years ago and should

have been removed several months ago. The problem is, the clinic no longer exists. Can my GP remove it? Is it dangerous to exceed the recommended time? I'm 49, and haven't had a period for six months.

A The Mirena coil works by releasing a slow, steady amount of a progestogen hormone to suppress the womb lining. If left in place beyond its five-year 'remove by' date, the hormone reservoir will run out and increase the chance of an unplanned pregnancy. Use an alternative method of contraception until this is sorted – you can't assume that you are postmenopausal because Mirena usually stops menstruation, too. To find your nearest family planning clinic, visit fpa.org.uk/find-a-clinic. Your GP will be able to remove the coil but may not be able to replace it unless they are trained in the method.

Healthy start to the day

Q Is the power of prunes for a healthy digestive system real or just a myth?

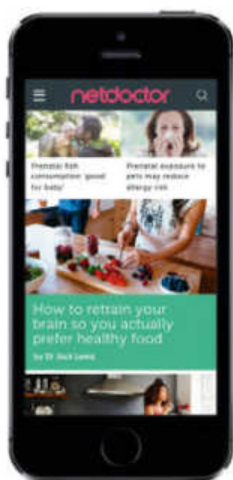
A The effect of prunes to keep you regular is not just due to the soluble fibre they contain (although it helps), but results from a substance called dihydroxyphenylisatin, which stimulates bowel secretions and intestinal contractions. Another benefit of prunes is that their balance of nutrients promotes the growth of beneficial bowel bacteria while suppressing others associated with inflammation. As a result, researchers have found that regularly eating prunes can reduce abnormal colon cell changes and help to protect against bowel cancer.





HEALTH ADVICE you can trust...

Being able to access reliable health information whenever you need it is one of the things that makes the internet great. But knowing whether you can trust what you find is a different story – unless you're on NetDoctor.co.uk. Not only is NetDoctor the UK's leading source of medically respected information, it's had a huge makeover and is now full of preventative and healthy living information – from expert nutrition to healthy homes. Visit NetDoctor.co.uk today for health information you can rely on.



Raised blood pressure

Q My blood pressure is usually around 145/90 on medication. But at a recent check-up, it was 200/110! My doctor arranged a 24-hour monitor, but all the results were low (around the 135 mark). What could have caused the spike?

A Some people have a strong stress response, which raises their blood pressure when they are in their GP's surgery and seeing a doctor or nurse. This phenomenon, known as white coat hypertension, affects as many as one in four people. Taking your average blood pressure reading over a 24-hour period, rather than isolated readings taken in a clinic or surgery, is a much better way to predict your long-term health risks. So it's reassuring that your 24-hour monitor was lower. However, your doctor may want to increase your medication to prevent this stress response happening again.

Alcohol and children

Q I recently read a worrying news report that said 39% of children aged between 10 and 14 years have seen their friends post online that they are drunk. How do I ensure my



teenager knows about the dangers of alcohol in a way they can understand?

A Children are increasingly seeing images of celebrities and peers drunk online. Surveys also suggest they view alcohol as a mood enhancer after a stressful day or on special occasions, like birthdays and Christmas. It's definitely sensible to be aware of how you use alcohol in front of children and to have a conversation with them about the risks of drinking alcohol, particularly under age. Drinkaware has some useful resources to help you talk about alcohol as a family. This includes an Alcohol: Fact or Fiction? quiz for children to understand the risks of alcohol and a leaflet, Your Kids and Alcohol, which will help you talk about things with your child. Visit drinkaware.co.uk/resources.

SARAH ON... A NEW TEST FOR OVARIAN CANCER

- Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cancer in women – and it has a poor survival rate. Of the 7,100 women diagnosed every year in the UK, just 2,600 will survive for at least five years.
- This is largely because there are few symptoms in the early, treatable stages, and also due to the lack of a robust screening method. By the time a woman goes to her doctor with symptoms, such as persistent bloating, feeling full quickly after eating, persistent pelvic or abdominal pain, urinary frequency or swelling, the disease is usually advanced.
- If your GP suspects ovarian cancer, blood tests measure the level of a protein called CA125 and, if the level is raised over a certain value, an ultrasound is



requested. But this method is only 41% accurate at identifying the disease.

- The new ROCA Test assesses how CA125 levels change over time and with age, and is 86% accurate at detecting ovarian cancer. Part funded by the NHS, the new ROCA screening test

may soon be offered free to all women over 50 and to younger women with a high familial risk of ovarian cancer.

- For the time being, the test is available privately at a cost of £115 per year for one initial blood test and two follow-ups if the first result is abnormal. The test is done by a consultant, who will also charge a fee for their time. For women at high risk, the annual package is £345 and includes four-monthly tests, via therocatest.co.uk.



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Start your year as you mean to go on with our 16 simple steps to help you feel fitter, healthier and happier every day

1 WASH YOUR HANDS – PROPERLY

Thoroughly washing your hands is the best way to stop catching – and passing on – nasty winter bugs, from norovirus to flu. However, a 2003 study found that only 61% of women wash their hands after going to the loo (and men are even worse!). And when we wash, shockingly, hardly any of us use soap. Doctors at Great Ormond Street Hospital say you should put soap on wet hands, then rub your hands together vigorously for 20 to 30 seconds. It's also vital to dry hands properly, preferably with a paper towel, as wet hands pick up more germs.

2 SIT LESS AND MOVE MORE OFTEN

Sitting down is a health time bomb, increasing your risk of cancer and playing havoc with your blood sugar. The good news is a study at the University of Utah School of Medicine found that trading two minutes of sitting for two minutes of light exercise every hour can almost reverse the negative health effects of prolonged sitting. 'Taking the stairs, standing up when on the phone and heading for some fresh air at lunch all provide numerous health benefits,' says Nuffield Health's Simon Cabot.

3

STOP SMOKING

We know. Obvious, right? After all, smoking causes cancer, heart disease and lung problems. But if you need another incentive to stop, studies show that smoking also worsens back pain (which affects 80% of us at some point in our lives). E-cigarettes can help you quit, and a study this year by Public Health England found they were 95% less harmful than cigarettes.

4

BE GOOD TO YOUR GUT

There's increasing evidence that the bacteria in your gut plays a huge role in keeping you slim, happy and healthy. But when the bacteria become imbalanced, your body suffers. Professor Tim Spector, author of *The Diet Myth: The Real Science Behind What We Eat* (W&N, £14.99), says, 'Microbes are not only essential to how you digest food, they also control the calories you absorb and provide vital enzymes and vitamins, as well as keeping your immune system healthy.' To keep it balanced, eat yoghurt, unpasteurised cheeses (unless you're pregnant), dark chocolate and lots of fruit and veg. Also, exercise regularly and avoid artificial sweeteners and too much alcohol. You can also try a prebiotic, such as Bimuno (from £8.99, bimuno.com).

5 GET FIT IN THREE MINUTES

Gym-phobics, rejoice! All you need is three minutes a week to boost your health. Studies show the best way to reduce insulin resistance – problems regulating blood sugar that can lead to diabetes – is by doing a hard but fast exercise known as high intensity training (HIT). If you're on a stationary bike, warm up with gentle pedalling for two minutes, then go as fast as you can for 20 seconds – imagine you are being pursued by a zombie horde! Repeat twice more. Doing this three times a week can have dramatic effects, reversing high blood sugar as well as burning fat from the tummy and thighs. Check out at-home HIT workouts by Joe Wicks (aka The Bodycoach) on his YouTube channel TheBodyCoachTV.

6

FALL FOR FISH

The NHS recommends you eat at least two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish. Fish boosts heart and brain health, and may lower your risk of stroke. Eye expert Professor Dan Reinstein says, 'Omega-3, found in oily fish such as herring, mackerel and fresh tuna, can help to reduce common dry eye symptoms.'

7

WEAR SUNSCREEN EVERY DAY

You might think sunscreen is just for sunny days. Wrong! While UVB rays, which cause sunburn, are only a risk in the warmer months, UVA rays, which cause ageing and skin cancer, are present whenever the sun is in the sky. Cosmetic physician and skin specialist Dr Sach Mohan of Revere Clinics in Harley Street and Northwood, north-west London, says, 'UV rays account for 80% of skin ageing and, while UVB are not as strong in winter, UVA rays are present all year round. Wearing daily sunscreen that protects against both is a must.'

8

DON'T BE D-FICIENT

The government's Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition has proposed that children and adults in the UK should take a daily vitamin D supplement. The UK's cloudy climate stops you from getting enough sun to keep your bones strong and to ward off depression. To help boost your sunshine vitamins, try a daily spritz of a peppermint-flavoured oral spray supplement from the BetterYou DLux range (from £6.95, betteryou.com).

9

GET PROTEIN POWER

Prima's Dr Sarah Brewer says for strong muscles and healthy hair, you need plenty of protein in your diet. She advises: 'Every day, swap one carbohydrate – such as bread, potatoes or rice – for protein.' This doesn't have to mean eating more meat, as there's good protein in peas, chickpeas, lentils, fish, eggs and cheese. The average person needs around one gram of protein per day for each kilogram of body weight. So if you weigh 70kg, for example, you need roughly 70g of protein per day from your diet. ➔



10 TAKE CARE OF YOUR GUMS...

Looking after your teeth won't be news to you, but good gum health is just as important. Dentist Dr Hanel Nathwani of the Kensington Dental Spa says: 'Gum disease occurs when gums become irritated by acids from plaque on teeth. It can lead to receding gums and tooth loss and has strong links with heart disease and heart attacks. Nearly all of us will have some form of gum disease in our lifetime.' The solution? 'Take a few minutes every day to gently brush your gums using a soft brush, and floss once a day,' says Dr Nathwani.

11

...AND GET A MEGAWATT SMILE

Dentist Dr Uchenna Okoye of the London Smiling Dental Group says, 'For a fabulous healthy smile in 2016, "power up" and update your manual toothbrush to the 21st century.' All electric toothbrushes brush better and smarter than your old brush for a lower risk of decay and tooth loss.

12 HAVE A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

There's evidence that a good night's sleep won't just help you feel great, it'll also help you stay slim. But getting quality ZZZs is what really counts. 'Allow your brain to switch off by avoiding checking emails or social media for 90 minutes before bedtime. Instead, read a book, listen to relaxing music and have a bath using essential oils, such as lavender, to help promote sleepiness,' says sleep expert Dr Nerina Ramlakhan, author of *Tired But Wired: How to Overcome Your Sleep Problems: the Essential Sleep Toolkit* (Souvenir Press, £12.99). 'The caffeine in just one cup of coffee can take up to 10 hours to leave your system, so avoid it close to bedtime or switch to decaffeinated. Dehydration is a key cause of frequent waking or "shallow" sleep, so increase your fluid intake by drinking more water or herbal teas before bed. Also, eat breakfast within 30 minutes of rising. This stabilises blood sugar and helps set your body clock for the day to optimise melatonin secretion for sleep.'

13 EAT A RAINBOW

Carotenoids are a large group of phytochemicals found in red, orange and yellow fruits, such as tomatoes and carrots, and dark green veggies, such as spinach. In a new study, women with the highest levels of carotenoids had up to 28% lower risk of breast cancer compared with those with the lowest carotenoid levels. More dramatically, higher amounts could cut the risk of the most aggressive cancers by almost 70%.

14 BOOK AN EYE TEST

The NHS recommends an eye exam every two years, yet just over half of us visit an optician once every five years. Eye tests are vital for checking sight and eye health. 'There are some serious eye conditions, such as glaucoma and retinal tears, that often have no symptoms,' says eye surgeon Professor Dan Reinstein. What's more, Dr Nigel Best of Specsavers adds: 'Retinal photography, part of our process for everyone over 40, can flag indicators for an array of conditions such as glaucoma, diabetes and high blood pressure.'

15 BE A LITTLE LESS SWEET

A government report has recommended we slash our added sugar intake by half to 30g, which is the equivalent of seven teaspoons a day. Nutrition expert Ursula Arens says it's important to focus on ditching the 'empty sugars', such as fizzy drinks and sweets, before we cut out healthier options containing natural sugar such as fruit, which also contains vitamins. 'Studies show that people who eat fruit or drink a glass of juice daily tend to be slimmer and healthier than people who don't,' says Ursula. A typical 330ml can of fizzy cola contains 36g of sugar, and a 125g fruit yoghurt contains 15.9g of total sugar, most of it added. By contrast, 125g plain yoghurt with some strawberries has the same total amount of sugar, but all of it is natural. Nutritionist Ian Marber says, 'Alternatives like agave have the same effect as the sugar you're trying to avoid, so the best thing is to only eat sweet things occasionally.'

16 EASE UP ON ALCOHOL

From mulled wine to Champagne, there's plenty to tempt you over Christmas. So, to give your liver a reboot, make 2016 the time to get back to the recommended limit of 14 units a week for women and 21 for men. There are nine units in an average bottle of wine and two units in a pint of average-strength beer. Aim for three booze-free days a week and, when you do indulge, drink slowly and alternate with water.



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‘Computer games took over my son’s life’

Struggling with a child who’s always absorbed in computer games? Take heart from this mother and son’s story, which shows how to come out the other side

During the holidays, thousands of children are likely to disappear into their rooms to play with their new Xbox One or PS4 games consoles for hours on end. But many parents wonder, just how much play is too much? Here, Vanessa Wootton, 55, from London reveals what happened to her family.

When my 21-year-old son Dean walked through the door one Christmas, it was hard to hide the shock on my face. His skin was pale and waxy, his hollow eyes were ringed with dark circles and he’d gained so much weight – at 5ft 11in, he weighed 17 stone.

“I’ve been eating lots of takeaways and playing games,” he said, shrugging.

I knew his life was drifting – after lots of different courses, he was finding it hard to focus at university. But never in a million years would I have suspected the problem lay with computer games. That’s the thing about boys – it’s so hard to find out what makes them tick.

Growing up, Dean was a sensitive, clever child – at eight, he was streets ahead of his class at maths. Later, he won a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school, coming home at the weekends. As he hit his teens, I started

Dean confided in his mum Vanessa after he realised he was addicted to gaming



to suspect he wasn't happy at school. He shrugged off my questions and the school said everything was fine. Looking back, he was trying to protect me. I was a single parent, working hard to support Dean and his younger sister Suzy, and he was very protective of my feelings.

TRYING TO HELP

But, when he was 15, he started to spend more time in his room playing computer games. I didn't see an issue – they didn't seem violent, his schoolwork wasn't suffering. Most of the parents I knew were worried about their teenagers going out drinking, while all Dean wanted to do was hang out in his room.

By the time he was 17, I'd see the light on under his door late at night and hear the drring, drrring noise as he won more "gold coins". A whole summer passed and he'd be in his room with the curtains drawn to stop the glare on his screen. Occasionally, Suzy and I would peek over his shoulder to see what all the fuss was about, but the appeal was lost on me. His friend Tommy would try to drag him outside to play sports, but Dean preferred to stay in. When I interrupted him, he'd get grumpy. Sometimes I'd insist he came out for some fresh air, but you can't do that sort of thing every day, can you?

The world of computer games was still a mystery to me, but they were evolving. Kids were now playing Massively Multiplayer Online games (MMOs), such as *World of Warcraft*. Instead of a one-off game with a beginning and an end, these were never-ending online quests, with other players around the world.

This innovation happened just as Dean was going away to university. Suddenly, games were even more addictive and he could now play uninterrupted for hours. He became hard to reach on the phone and looked less and less healthy. As a child, he'd been so serious about his schoolwork but this dedication had gone. Little did I know he was bingeing on games – I've since learned he once played *World of Warcraft* for three days straight, only taking breaks to go to the loo or fetch

food. And, at the end of that session, he felt physically sick. That's when he first realised that he was addicted.

But he didn't ask for help and, like so many addicts, he became good at hiding his habit. When he came to visit, he'd be the smiley, shy son I knew – just a little distracted. He left university scraping a basic degree and drifted from job to job. He talked about travelling, but it just never happened.

And then, in autumn 2014, I received a phone call. "Can I come back and live with you for a bit?" asked Dean. "There's something I need to do."

The moment he arrived, I could see a difference. At 12 stone, he'd lost the last of the weight, but it was more than that. He looked brighter, relaxed. His sister and I were astonished – this was the best he'd looked in years.

"I haven't played games for three months," he said.

It was then that the full story came out – that gaming had taken over and that the only way to get his life back under control was to

stop completely. He'd taken up new hobbies, like kick-boxing, and had decided to write a book to help others quit gaming, too. He wanted to live with me while he wrote it.

As I proofread each chapter for him, I realised the depth of Dean's addiction. I felt incredibly guilty – wishing I'd been more aware, taken away his computer. But he also says those times I nagged him were so important – it helped tear him away from the games and just having me around had helped keep the habit in check.

As we spent more time together, the sweet, sensitive Dean I knew was re-emerging. He self-published his book *How To Stop*

'I'm so proud of Dean for turning his life around and helping others'

Gaming and, through it, he has been mentoring a young addict; it's good to see that he's now helping people.

Dean has been game-free for over a year now and I'm so proud of the way he has turned his life around. But I know other families are going through this, too. All I can stress is communication. Encourage them to play games with a beginning and an end, chat to them about their lives. And tell them to go outside sometimes. Let them know you care.'

Dean, now 34, says:

'The problem with computer games is that they're meant to be addictive, in the same way that a gripping book can be. For most people, it stays at that level – something to dip into. But for me, and others like me, there's no such thing as casual gaming.'

When the bullying started at school in my teens, I didn't want to bother Mum. She'd worked so hard since the divorce and I didn't want to be any trouble. So instead I retreated into games. The little tinkling noise when I won gold coins gave me a burst of satisfaction, and I remember starting to feel angry when anyone interrupted me.

But it wasn't until I was away at university, and I started playing *World of Warcraft*, that my problem got ➔

THE GAMING GUIDE FOR PARENTS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **MMO:** Massively Multiplayer Online games, which involve thousands of participants accessing the game simultaneously online.
- **RPG:** Role Player Games. The player assumes the role of a character and embarks on a series of quests.
- **Clan/Guild:** Players often band together in these groups to complete 'raids' together.
- **FPS:** First Person Shooter, where the main objective is to shoot opponents down.
- **RL:** Real Life. That thing that happens when the device is switched off!

much worse. There are many addictive qualities in these games – it's an ongoing story so you never feel like you're done. Instead, your character just gets stronger, more powerful – and more difficult to walk away from. But the hardest thing was the social aspect. I made lots of friends online and we'd band together to carry out virtual raids to acquire wealth and strength, which could take four hours or more.

It was this that kept me hooked for so long, which meant my real life suffered. I got into debt and neglected the relationship I was in, so when I did try to quit, there were lots of real-world problems crashing in on me – the bills, the debt, the unhappy relationship – that it was easier to retreat back into the game.

TAKING CONTROL

Before I knew it, I was organising my life to make as much time as possible for play. I did the minimum amount of study, and then, when I started work, I'd spend my time reading up on tactics online and posting on forums. I'd get a job, use that to apply for a loan, then quit and play games instead. I ended up with a debt of over £40,000, playing games for up to 50 hours a week.

I made several attempts to quit; I'd get in shape, pay off some of the debts, get a girlfriend. But when something in life went wrong, I'd go back to gaming. Until, finally, last year I'd had enough. I erased my *World of Warcraft* account and set myself

a series of projects to focus on. I taught myself Android programming (to write apps for mobile phones) and tried martial arts and mountain biking. But, most importantly, I decided to write a book about what I'd been through. If I was too idle, I started thinking about games. Having the book to pour my attention into, and being upfront with Mum, really helped and now I hope I can help others to quit, too.

The writing process also got me to think about what I really wanted from life. I'd always planned to travel and learn a new language, so I applied for a teaching post in China – and got it! I spent 25 years living through games. Now it's time to build my life in reality and I can't wait to get going.'

• *Dean's book, How To Stop Gaming: A Way Out of Computer Game Addiction, is available to download at Amazon. Visit howtostopgaming.com*

Vanessa is proud of Dean for overcoming his addiction and mentoring others in similar situations



WHEN TO WORRY

Video game addiction is rare – your child can spend hours enjoying games without having a problem. After all, how long do we spend watching TV? But, psychologist Mark Griffiths from Nottingham Trent University says if your child ticks four or more of the boxes below, they may be playing too much. Do they:

- ☐ Play games almost every day
- ☐ Play for 3 or 4 hours at a time
- ☐ Get restless, irritable and moody if they can't play
- ☐ Sacrifice social and sporting activities to play
- ☐ Play video games instead of doing homework
- ☐ Try to cut down but can't

How to help a youngster obsessed with gaming

- **Find out what they're playing.** All games have a PEGI rating, which gives an age recommendation and some idea of content. For more, visit peginfo.info.
- **Don't tell them to read a book.** Many gamers find books or the television flat. Instead, find out what else interests them. Ex-addict Cam Adair of Gamequitters.com suggests helping them develop interests based on the genre of game they play. If they love first person shooter games, focus on goal-based

activities like sport, while role play enthusiasts might prefer something more creative.

- **Keep talking** to your child about how the game fits in with their life, so they know they can approach you for help.
- **Find support.** Gaming addiction is not yet a recognised medical condition so there are no specialist rehab clinics. However, you can ask your GP for referral to a counsellor. Support can be found through On-Line Gamers Anonymous; olganon.org.

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Brilliant
money
moves

RED HOT MONEY ADVICE from a real Dragon...

Every woman should know these eight financial truths, says straight-talking businesswoman Deborah Meaden

With 11 series of BBC Two's *Dragons' Den* under her belt, entrepreneur Deborah Meaden certainly knows her stuff when it comes to getting a good deal, making sense of her money mistakes and sensible spending. Here, she shares her financial wisdom so we can all kick off 2016 with the right kind of resolutions.

1 TAKE CONTROL

When you use the word 'budget', everyone flinches and thinks only accountants can understand them. But a budget is no more than saying, 'I have this much money coming in and this much going out.' If you can understand your baseline, you'll be able to work out how to get yourself out of whatever financial situation you are in. Try keeping a list under two columns for about a month. Under the first column, make a note of essential expenditure and, under the other, discretionary purchases. In addition, it's also useful to keep a year planner to write down all the one-offs like holidays, birthday gifts and Christmas, and guesstimate how much you'll spend on items each month. Sooner or later, if you don't take control, someone else will come after you for that money. I'm a control freak so I'm all about understanding my position.



2 THINK OF THE WORK

I grew up knowing the real value of money. That's the best financial lesson I have learned. Money represents hours of hard work so, to properly value it, I like to think of the effort required to earn it whenever I am considering buying something. We didn't have any money in my family when I was young – we had to save up. I couldn't have everything I wanted and I didn't have piles of Christmas presents. For a while, we were a single-parent family and my mum was working hard, so there was a real connection between my mum going out to work and me having the thing that I wanted.

3 EMBRACE ALL YOUR MISTAKES

Mistakes lead to better decisions. It's an easy thing to say, but I have learned more from my mistakes than I have from getting things right. You carry on when you get something right. But when I get something wrong – which I hate – it hurts more and I have to work out which bit went wrong. Very early on, I got myself into debt on my credit card. It was £3,000 but, with no real way of paying it off, it felt like a huge deal and I had to ask my parents to guarantee a loan at the bank to cover it. Being fiercely independent, I really didn't like having to ask for help and I now counsel anyone when taking out a loan or spending on credit cards to have worked out how the money can be paid back before they borrow it. Very rarely are situations total mistakes. But you have to move on! Don't

dwell on them. Think about it, identify where you went wrong and then get on with it.

4 STOP WORRYING!

Money can feel overwhelming, which leads to emotion. Doing something is very empowering. Running things over and over in your head is a complete waste of time. Whenever I have got into debt, I have gone to the other person and explained. It feels better to have done something than being caught in a mire of worry. That does nothing but cloud the issue, which makes it worse.

5 PLAN YOUR WAY OUT OF DEBT

I am guilty of overspending at Christmas. Usually, it's down to a lack of planning, when all my usual money rules have gone out of the window. Every year, we'll have a list of things we need for the house, and my husband and I will go on a very rare shopping trip and end up with a basket full of stuff that was never on the list! I have also wasted so much money on presents simply because I haven't planned. Three days before Christmas, I always find myself spending £100 on a guilt purchase. After Christmas, there's no point just saying you have to

cut back. You have a set amount of money coming in over a year, so if you have overspent, that money has to be moved from somewhere else. You have to work out if you are going to be very strict in January to make up some cash or eat and drink a bit less for the first three months of the year. If you overspend, you have to identify where you're going to save it.

6 UNDERSTAND YOUR PENSION

I have the view that I care a lot more about my money than the people who look after my pension – and you should, too. People assume their money will be safe but there have been instances when it's gone horribly wrong. Don't allow yourself to feel bombarded or confused by information. Sit down and have a meeting and, if an expert is explaining something and you don't understand it, it's not because you're stupid, it's because they're not very good at their job. Keep asking questions until you understand and feel fully informed.

7 DON'T CARRY CASH

I don't carry a lot of money with me. Once you have cash in your wallet, it's surprising how quickly it vanishes and you think, 'Wait a minute, I had £50 in my wallet and all I've bought is a coffee!' You forget how easy it is to spend cash when it's physically there in front of you. I withdraw cash only as and when I need it. I very rarely make impromptu purchases. Probably because I don't enjoy shopping, so



I don't put myself in that position. At first, I think, 'Do I need this?' And if I wake up the next day and think about it then, yes, I'll buy it. But if I've forgotten about it, then it obviously wasn't that important.

8 WORK TO LIVE

We need to realise that this isn't a rehearsal, this is life and we need to enjoy it. Our parents' generation worked out of necessity, and we've seen them reach the end of their lives possibly thinking they hadn't seen or done everything they wanted to. I think we are starting to value the living of life and not just the making of money – that's certainly happening with the younger generation. Our generation was taught to roll up our sleeves and work hard for as long as we could, but we have also begun to see another way – whether that's changing career or retiring earlier. I think it's important to enjoy what you do.

• *Deborah is working with the MicroLoan Foundation through its partners Lend With Care to help women work their way out of poverty. For more information, visit microloanfoundation.org.uk*



GET READY FOR THE HOTTEST TECH OF 2016

And here it is – the shiny new gadgetry that we're set to covet in the year ahead



Three new health kicks

SLENDERTONE CONNECT ABS

Light enough to wear under your clothes, this ab-toning belt is Slendertone's most powerful to date. You can sneak in the equivalent of 202 ab crunches in just 30 minutes while you're at your desk or on the train. Now, that's multitasking! It works with an app that tailors a programme for you and sends you reminders to get toning. £179.99, *Slendertone*



WISHBONE THERMOMETER

If you have a young family, the Wishbone is a clever addition to the medicine cabinet. This non-contact thermometer will read a child's temperature, without having to touch the skin. Instead you hold it 3-5cm away. It plugs into your smartphone and measures temperature via an app within two seconds. It's also handy for bathwater, food and room temperatures. £34.99, *Wishbone*



PITPAT

Has someone been having too many treats over the festive period and spending hours snoozing on the sofa? Before you confess, we mean the dog! If you feel your pooch needs to shake a leg, you can monitor its activity with PitPat, a new waterproof activity tracker for dogs. It shows running, walking, playing and resting. And, like human fitness monitors, it links to an app so you can set goals according to breed and age to help Fido stay trim. And, of course, you can check how much 'resting' goes on while you're out. £39.99, *Pitpat*



Six game-changing gadgets

iPhone 6S

We're lusting after the slender, glamorous, rose gold version of the iPhone 6s. But it's not just the looks, honest. There's the sharp 4K video, the 12-megapixel camera and the faster-than-before Touch ID, which lets you instantly unlock your phone with your fingerprint. Worth the upgrade. *Plans from around £39.99 a month, depending on provider*



Keep your finger on the pulse

ELECTRIC JUKEBOX

For a music streaming service with a difference, go for Electric Jukebox, which works directly through your TV. Turn your lounge into a disco by plugging the USB into the back of the TV and using the voice-activated remote to select tracks. It's easy to use and has a sociable focus for families. *£179 (includes a year's premium music pass; then £60 a year), Electric Jukebox*



APPLE PAY

Apple Pay lets you shop without having to use cash or card. Simply tap your iPhone 6 against a shop's contactless reader, while placing a finger on the phone's Touch ID to verify the payment. (If you're relying on this method, make sure your phone is charged or you could be stranded!) *Free, Apple*



'ON THIS DAY' FILTER

Facebook's 'On this Day' feature is a time-hop reminder of events that happened a year or two ago. A snap of a girls' night is a laugh, but a reminder of your ex can be upsetting. An upgrade means you can now filter unhappiness from your Facebook past! *Go to Preferences and enter the names you'd prefer not to see; free, Facebook*



SONOS PLAY:5

Sonos makes top-of-the-range wi-fi speakers and, for 2016, it's going one step further. The new Trueplay technology makes tracks sound true to their original recording, using your iPhone or iPad to measure how sound reflects off walls and furniture in the room and adjusting the speaker accordingly. So now you'll

hear *Super Trouper* just as Abba intended. *£429, Amazon*



ePANO SELFIE



The selfie stick may be so 2015, but it's not over yet... The rotating Rollei ePano head attaches to selfie sticks to take 360 degree panoramic shots. Great for capturing beautiful landscapes – or for putting yourself in the bigger picture! *£49.95, Amazon*

AMAZON FIRE TV BOX

The Fire TV box makes your TV smart, if it isn't already, and is the way to access Amazon Prime Video. We'll be hearing a lot more about it in 2016, as Jeremy Clarkson and pals launch their new car show on Prime Video. But don't worry, there are thousands of films and programmes on there for non 'petrol heads', too. Prime, which costs £79 a year, also includes free one-day delivery on Amazon purchases and one free book a month from the Kindle lending library. The box is punchier than its little brother (the cheaper Fire TV stick) with higher quality sound. If you have a 4K Ultra HD TV, you can also stream selected films in 4K. *£79.99, Amazon*



CHROMECAST AUDIO

This bargain buy will certainly give non-wi-fi speakers a new lease of life, as you can stream music from your phone or tablet to any speaker in the house. Plug the Chromecast into your speaker to transform it, then download the Chromecast app, connect to your wi-fi and you're ready to rock. You can queue tracks and turn up the volume via music streaming apps. Watch out though – visitors (eg your teenager's friends) can play their music, too. *£30, Currys*



ROBO.COM³

Hoover's new robot vacuum cleaner is wi-fi enabled, so you can control it remotely from your smartphone or tablet and tell it to get the vacuuming done by the time you get home from work. It even heads back to its charging station for a top-up when it's running low on power. It can't tackle stairs, but is slim enough to whizz under beds and has a polisher for hard floors. Clean freaks can schedule it to vacuum every day. *£499.99, Hoover*



Sarah Beeny's Love your HOME

A fresh start

Sarah Beeny shares her wisdom on how to improve your home in the New Year and reveals her resolutions

🏠 **For me, 2016 is going to be the year of the garden.** I know I'll be planting as much as possible as I take so much pleasure from watching plants and trees grow. I think it's because time seems to pass quicker as you get older, so it's lovely to see plants grow at a much slower pace.

🏠 **There's no doubt that the coming year will see interesting trends in the home.** I think we'll see more and more personalisation. Being able to create your own patterns, use your own photography and design your own fabrics and wallpapers to truly personalise your home will be big. We'll also see faux furs featured more and the rustic 'log cabin' style will be popular.

🏠 **I'm also excited about seeing reconstituted and recycled materials come to the fore.** As prices come down, people will be more adventurous about using these materials. I've fallen in love with the totally amazing reconstituted granite from granitetransformations.co.uk. It has all the life of real marble but at a fraction of the cost and environmental impact. It's thinner, easier to fit and warmer to the touch, too. It's a really impressive product.



🏠 **Despite what we're told, there are no new colours** — as anyone who has looked at a full colour chart knows. What happens is that combinations of colours become fashionable and it's these combinations that create a 'new look'. I think we'll see strong, dark colours coming through next year. Dark oranges and deep navy blues will look fab — often to edge a lighter version of the same colour.

🏠 **In 2016, we should make the most of unloved spaces, such as hallways.**

Do you have a space in your home that you consider too small to use? Now's the time to do something with it, such as creating a collection of wall art. Frame your favourite objects or print out some of the thousands of photos you no doubt have on your computer. This will really fill the space and make a once-ignored area more engaging.

🏠 **If you're planning a New Year home-decorating revamp, flicking through magazines is a good place to start.**

Browsing the internet is a good idea, too — Pinterest, in particular, is a brilliant tool. Really trawl around until you've found some general room

settings that spark ideas. Then, once you have the overall look, you can start getting down to the details — but refer back to your original larger roomscapes to make sure the detailing works. Only then should you start to get samples of fabric, wallpaper and paint etc.

🏠 **My New Year's resolution is to 'get ready for sale'.** This doesn't mean we have any intention of

selling. But you can end up living in a home for 20 years with parts not finished and only ever do the last bits that make it lovely just before selling. I'm determined to 'do' bedspreads, curtain tie-backs, waste paper baskets and bedside lamps in the early part of next year — all the little things that make a home nicer to live in.

🏠 **Start as you mean to go on and have a good spring clean.** Move the furniture out of each room, clean it all really well and then put it back in different places. It's amazing how much better things can look, simply by rearranging them.

🏠 **My husband Graham and I try to detox a bit in January, so for us it's a good month to get things done.** But I've learned not to make unrealistic New Year's resolutions that can make January pretty depressing. Of course, January is a time of reflection and action but let's keep it real: trying to double your salary, upsize your house, get married, have children, train for a marathon and lose four stone, all in four weeks, simply isn't realistic!



'Next year, I'm determined to do all the little things to make my home nicer to live in'

🏠 **I think we're heading towards a patterned period in wallpaper.**

But rather than the vintage 1950s styles that have been around in recent years, there will be a move towards recognisable images, with references back to wildlife and nature. Wallpaper will be used a great deal in 2016, I reckon.



‘It’s cold outside... COME ON IN!’

Anke Vincent’s lovely Victorian home is extra special at this time of year, as she fills it with hand-crafted decorations and accessories bought during visits to her native Germany



EXTERIOR

LEFT AND BELOW: The rustic trellis on the traditional semi is there all year round and was made by Anke’s husband Jim. At Christmas, Anke dresses it with seasonal foliage and disguises the meter box with a fake wreath.

Have you ever been to a Christmas market? If so, you’ll know that you always find the most interesting and unusual decorations there, and that it’s almost impossible to resist bringing a few home. Anke Vincent knows all about this, as she is from Germany, where Christmas markets are hugely popular. She always has the perfect excuse to stock up when she goes back for a visit. It’s this simple, hand-crafted style that is her signature during the festive period.

Anke and her husband Jim bought their Victorian terraced home in East Molesey, Surrey, 10 years ago. ‘We were living in nearby West Molesey, in a smaller house with our toddler Mia, when I got pregnant with Maisy, our second daughter,’ says Anke. ‘Moving to a bigger house for our growing family coincided with Jim wanting to take on a “project”.

‘We liked the area and had made friends here, so we looked around and eventually found a very run-down house in a quiet road that was being used as a shed! The old lady who owned it had been living next door and using this house as storage. She was living in poor conditions, and both houses were in a terrible state,’ says Anke. ‘There were even plants growing out ➔

KITCHEN

BELOW: Forming part of the new extension, the kitchen now has a mix of old and new cabinets. These were from Callaghan Interiors and Christchurch Kitchens. The couple found the striking lights at John Lewis.



KITCHEN

LEFT: The couple have had this dresser for some time and decided to repaint it to match their new neutral scheme. The blue and white china from Villeroy & Boch was a wedding present.



Gorgeous real home

SITTING ROOM

To remind her of home, Anke has a real tree, which she dresses simply. She displays candles on every surface as well as a pine cone garland on the mantelpiece. The warming stove came from Bradley & Brown in Thames Ditton and the pretty shaped mirror was left behind by the previous owner and repainted by Anke.



EXTENSION

LEFT: The new extension opens up the back of the house and the family spend most of their time here now. It's also a great space for gatherings. The table, bench and chairs came from Heal's. The unusual Father Christmas and red metal heart lantern came from Anke's native Germany.

SITTING ROOM

RIGHT: The room is painted simply in cream and grey. This neutral palette continues throughout the house and makes for an easy base for pretty furnishings and decorations.





‘At Christmas, we love having friends and family over for gatherings; there’s plenty of room for everyone!’



of the kitchen floor! However, one of the great things about it is that the garden looks out on to the River Ember at the back. It had potential.’

Anke and Jim were able to buy the house at a reasonable price, due to its condition. It hadn’t been touched for 40 years, had all the original features, such as fireplaces and picture rails, but it also had dangerous electrics and out-of-date plumbing, so had to be completely gutted.

The couple then decided to add an extension on to the back for a more spacious kitchen and a bigger master bedroom. They also added a conservatory and knocked through the small sitting and dining room. New electrics, plumbing and damp-proofing were required before the couple could start to design how the house would look. ‘We couldn’t live in the house with a toddler and a new baby while the work was being done,’ says Anke. ‘So we rented a house nearby, but we were keen to get it finished as soon as we could. Jim’s a surveyor so acted as project manager and kept the work moving, which definitely helped.’

Once all the major structural work was done, the couple could think about how they wanted

HALLWAY

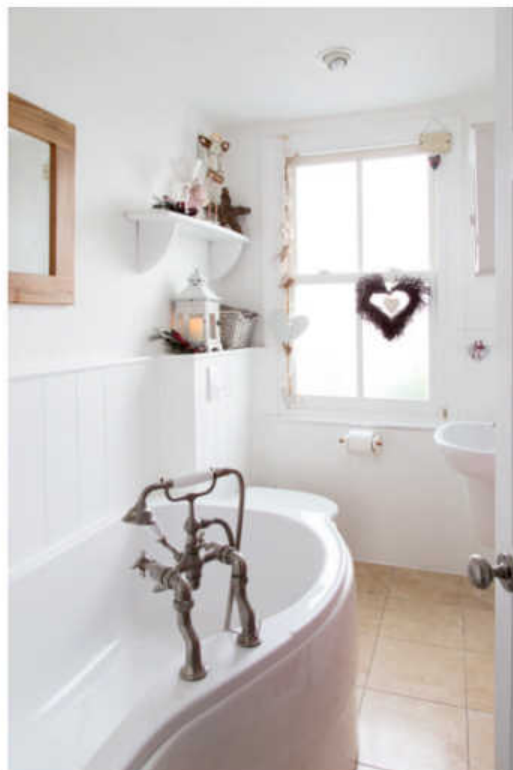
ABOVE LEFT: Anke dresses the hallway for Christmas with a fake garland along the banister. She also adds fake fruit and small decorations.

BEDROOM

ABOVE: The couple’s bedroom overlooks the garden and has a pretty Juliet balcony. The metal bed is from Laura Ashley and the mint-coloured silk throw is from The White Company. The wall colour was mixed to order. The curtains are from Osborne & Little.

BATHROOM

RIGHT: The main bathroom has a curved bath to make the best use of the space. Lanterns with candles add to the Christmas feel along with decorations from Germany.



the house to look. 'We wanted a mixture of old and new,' says Anke. 'The original floorboards were in good condition, so we decided to keep some where we could, replacing any damaged ones.'

The floorboards were either varnished or painted, depending on which room they were in. All the original fireplaces were also retained where possible, but in the sitting room, the couple removed the fire surround and installed a wood burner as a focal point. 'It came from our previous house but fits perfectly here,' says Anke. The mirror above the wood burner was left in the house by the previous owner and Anke updated it with a coat of paint. Logs fill the fireplace at the other end of the room for a cosy feel.

To create a focal point in the living room, Anke used a pale grey striped wallpaper from Laura Ashley on one wall. She also painted the chimney breast wall in a grey paint from Little Greene and added glitter for extra interest. The table came from an

antiques shop in nearby Weybridge and Anke painted it in pale grey to complement the overall tone. It goes beautifully with the chairs, which came from Jim's parents.

A year ago, Anke and Jim decided to replace the existing kitchen and conservatory with a larger open-plan extension. 'The previous kitchen had always been dark as it was so close to the neighbour's wall, and we wanted a large, airy room with doors that opened right up to make more use of the outside space and view,' says Anke. 'To keep costs down, we reused the old units as they were good quality and came from a local design company. We added an island unit to complete the kitchen and I moved my lovely antique dresser in here and repainted it.'

The family are now very happy in their house, especially with the new extension. 'It makes all the difference at Christmas, as we love having friends and family over for gatherings. There's plenty of room for everyone!' says Anke.



MIA'S BEDROOM
Mia loves her colourful room – especially her chandelier! At Christmas, she has a tree to dress.

Get Anke's welcoming look



Rustic **tea-light chandelier**, £40, The Orchard

Extra tall heart **lamp**, £39.95, Live Laugh Love



Heart **lantern**, £2.99, Dobbies



Pine cone **candles**, £3.50 each, The Contemporary Home



Chunky knit red **cushion**, £14, Tesco



Heart cookery **book stand**, £22.50, Boutique Provençale



LED twig **heart**, £14.95, Live Laugh Love



Red metal **jug**, £7, The Contemporary Home



Mosaic **hurricane lamp**, £6, Wilko

Country-style **table candelabra**, £10, The Contemporary Home



Rattan log **basket**, £35, Choice Baskets



Reclaimed wood **heart wall shelf**, £89, The Orchard

Let's get the PARTY started!

Having a New Year's Eve get-together? Make it magical with lots of sparkly, shiny accessories



Gold spot wine glass, £10 for 4, Wilko

Fun and funky



Gold pineapple ice bucket, £25, John Lewis

Fab value



Black and gold Martini glass, £7 for 2, George Home

Metallic tray, £14, Oliver Bonas



New in the shops!

Aquila pewter cushion, £45, Housing Units



Carraway drinks cabinet, £599; Champagne saucer, £15 for 2; ice bucket, £39.50; wreath, £39.50; tray, £35; Martini glasses, £15 for 4; cocktail shaker, £17.50; bar tools, £15 for 2, all Marks & Spencer

Boutique Hotel ice tongs, £4, John Lewis



It's cocktail time...

Rustle up a cocktail (or two) in the comfort of your own home. Cheers!



Round brass and marble drinks trolley, £325, MiaFleur



Handmade amber cocktail glass, £6, John Lewis



Luxe drinks trolley, £350, Oliver Bonas



Copper cocktail shaker tool set, £30, House of Fraser

Killer cutlery!

Step up to the plate with metallics – from bargain prices to heirloom pieces



Midas 16-piece **cutlery set** (not suitable for dishwashers), £20, George Home



16-piece copper effect **cutlery set**, £32, Next



Viners rose gold titanium 16-piece **cutlery set**, £99, Very



Biba Empire 24-piece **cutlery set**, £140, House of Fraser



Moroccan **tea-light holders** on stems, £10.95 each, Rigby & Mac



Gold star tea-light holder, £6, The Contemporary Home



Glass pillar champagne **candle holder**, £8, George Home

Get your party glow on!



Wooden **candle holders**, £1 each, Tiger



Gold pineapple paper **napkins**, £2.49 for 20, Candle & Cake



Jane Asher Christmas medium **cake boards** (available in gold and red), £1 each, Poundland



Acrylic Let's party **cake topper** (12in), £14, Talking Tables

Perfect for nibbles



Gold metallic spot tree **platter**, £8, BHS

Add a touch of silk and sparkle

Gold faux silk **cushion**, £9, George Home



Long acacia **board**, £15, Sainsbury's Home



Serve cheese in style

Feather cheese **knives**, £35 for 3, Laura Ashley



Silvered glass **cake stand** (medium), £34.50, Within



Fill with goodies



Medium mercury glass bonbon **jar**, £45, Marks & Spencer

Cutlery print **tray** in Slate, £26.50, Amara



For where to buy, see page 160

Girl about the house

With the busiest season of the year upon you, you'll need all the help you can get to be a domestic goddess!



3 LITTLE KITCHEN HELPERS

1 MEAT THERMOMETER

You use this to check when your turkey is ready, obviously, but it doubles up as a baster, too. **ThermoBaste**, £18, Joseph Joseph at Debenhams



2 SUPER-SHARP PEELER

This peeler is a work of art in mirror polished stainless steel. And it works like a dream! Sfrido potato **peeler**, £22, Valerio Sommella for Alessi



3 OVEN GLOVES

The raised nub pattern makes gripping the greasiest of roasting tins a doddle. Protect hands in temperatures up to 260°C and down to -92°C. A must-have. Oven **mitt**, £17.99, KitchenGrips at Amazon



FIVE STAR TREATMENT

Whether it's family or friends coming to stay, here's how to make their room welcoming.

- Double-check your bedding is in great condition and wash any new bed linen to soften it even more. Make things cosy with rugs, throws and soft lighting.
- Empty out a few drawers and some wardrobe space so your guests aren't living out of a suitcase during their stay.
- Jot down your wi-fi code so they can access emails, Facebook or Netflix.
- Treat your bathroom to a new bale of towels in a fresh colour. BHS has some great designs and a vast array of colours this season. Remember to wash towels first, before leaving them neatly folded on beds. It'll be like a lovely hotel!
- Add a scented candle or room diffuser so it always smells great. Dr Vranjes Ginger & Lime **diffuser** (right), from £28, Senti



Devon tripod desk **lamp**, £25; Paloma double **duvet set**, £15; sheepskin **rug**, £35; faux fur **throw**, £35; wooden **lanterns**, from £12; and all other items, Tesco Direct



Get your glasses sparkling

IT'S THE TIME WHEN ONLY GLEAMING WILL DO



- Wash glasses by hand with a little washing-up liquid and then rinse well to make them sparkle. It's dishwashers that are the real culprit of cloudy-looking glasses.
- If your glasses look cloudy from hard water, try this genius solution – Magic Balls (£5.98, Lakeland) clean glasses from the inside. Simply swirl in water. Hey presto!
- Avoid leaving glasses to air dry as you'll end up with water marks. Instead, opt for a clean tea towel to dry them after you've rinsed them with warm water.



RED WINE SPILLAGE ALERT!

It's bound to happen so be prepared...

On clothes: Place the garment taut over a bowl. Pour hot water over the stain until it is washed away.

On carpet: Add 1tsp of washing-up liquid to a jug of warm water. Pour a small amount on to the stain. With a clean cloth, blot (never rub) the stain from the outside in. Keep wetting and blotting until the stain is removed. Then, use fresh water to clean the area.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Do you actually know how to safely store food in your fridge? You do now!

- Keep your fridge at 5°C or below.
- Foods last longer if placed on the correct shelf. Dairy products belong on the top shelf, while middle shelves should house cooked meats and packaged foods. Place raw meat and fish in sealed containers on the bottom shelf. The salad drawer is for fruit and veg only.
- Eat leftovers within three days.
- Defrost food in the fridge overnight or in a cool kitchen during the day. Never leave frozen food out overnight.
- To make veggies and salads last longer, use airtight containers. The GreenSavers (from £14, Oxo; left) have elevated baskets that improve airflow and keep food fresh.



Try this trend!

Going for gold

Cherished Gold is said to be the paint colour we'll be lusting after in 2016, according to Dulux. It's more of an earthy ochre than blingy gold and is so versatile. This colour will go with anything from smart greys to the deepest blues, gorgeous mulberry shades through to metallics, greens and dusky pinks. I'm sold – will you be?

• Wall is painted in Cherished Gold and Dulux Salisbury Stones 3. For my pick of Cherished Gold inspired buys, see prima.co.uk/home-ideas



CATCH THE UPCYCLING BUG

Bring an old piece of furniture back to life using one of Earthborn's new eco-friendly furniture painting kits and waxes. Simply choose one of 72 shades, then prepare your piece, paint, wax and voilà!

• Eco Chic kit (two 750ml tins of Claypaint for Furniture, one 400ml tin of clear Furniture Wax, brush and booklet; below), £49.99, Earthborn



Style it, do it, love it!



IT'S TIME FOR BED!

I'm loving this rather chic futon. With its mid-century feel, it would look good as a statement chair and is just the thing for an extra guest bed where space is tight.

• Cuba single futon, £439, Futon Company

Finishing touches for insta-glam!

A few eye-catching extras can make all the difference



Metallic throw, £30, Next



Heart of House Keira mercury glass table lamp, £29.99, Argos

Bargain!



Star by Julien Macdonald candlestick, £9, Debenhams

STYLISH STORAGE

One of my missions for the New Year is to make the ordinary interesting. So any neglected corners will be getting a revamp, and a new laundry basket is top of the list for the bathroom. For simple style with a purpose, I'm smitten with these soft storage baskets and oak stools, which are handy for utility areas, too.

• Ashcroft soft baskets, from £40 each; Stratton step stool, £230, both Neptune



Cheer up a chore

Making life simple for the modern woman

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What you
smell.

What your
guests smell.



Have you gone noseblind?

Febreze truly eliminates odours and leaves a light Christmas scent.



Breathe Happy

Come on over and *celebrate!*

Planning a festive party or New Year gathering?

Keep things easy by creating a help-yourself buffet of delicious salads and platters. And don't forget a cheeky tipple to get the party started!

Hot rum punch Just the thing to welcome guests with when it's cold outside.

MAKES 16-20 CUPS (depending on size of cups)

PREP: 5 mins COOK: 10 mins TOTAL COST: £16.04

● In a large pan, add the zest of 1 lemon and 1 orange, the juice of 2 oranges, 75g/3oz demerara sugar, about 500ml/18fl oz water (you can dilute more or less to

your taste), a splash of cognac and a 1l bottle of spiced Jamaican rum. Throw in a cinnamon stick and apple slices from 2 apples, then bring to the boil. Stir until sugar dissolves, then reduce to a low simmer and heat on low for about 10 mins. Ladle into glasses and serve with a grating of nutmeg, if you like. ➔



Try this
These are best eaten hot, so make them just before guests arrive and serve with drinks.

Tempura prawns with a ginger dip

A light batter filled with meaty prawns – these will be gone in a flash!

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins
COOK: 20 mins TOTAL COST: £12.97

- Rapeseed oil, for frying
- 24 large raw prawns, shells off, tails on

FOR THE BATTER:

- 75g/3oz plain flour
- ½tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1tbsp cornflour
- 200ml/7fl oz sparkling water

FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE:

- 4tbsp dark soy sauce
- 2tbsp rice wine vinegar
- Pinch of sugar, to taste
- 5cm/2in piece of fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped or grated

● For the sauce, mix together all the ingredients. Season and taste; adjust seasoning, as needed. Put aside.

● To make the batter, add the flour, bicarbonate of soda and cornflour to

a bowl. Add a pinch of sea salt then, using a hand whisk or fork, slowly add the sparkling water, beating as you go to make a batter (don't over beat or the batter won't be light).

● Add rapeseed oil to a shallow deep-sided pan so it's at least quarter full and heat until hot. You can test it's hot enough by adding a teaspoon of batter – if ready, it should sizzle and crisp instantly. Dip the prawns into the batter one at a time and cook for 1 to 2 mins (you can cook 3 or 4 at a time) until pale golden and crispy. Remove with a slotted spoon and sit them on a plate lined with parchment paper. Continue until all prawns are cooked. Place them on a plate with the dipping sauce and let your guests dig in.

PER SERVING: KCALS 97; FAT 3g; SAT FAT 0.5g; CARBS 10g

MEAT-FREE!

Gorgonzola, squash & pine nut tart

A tart full to the brim with rich flavours. Yum!

SERVES 12 PREP: 30 mins COOK: 1 hr
TOTAL COST: £9.26

- 500g pack shortcrust pastry
- Flour, for dusting
- 1 butternut squash, halved, peeled, deseeded and chopped
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 200g bag of kale
- Handful of pine nuts, toasted
- 125g/4oz Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled
- 200ml/7fl oz double cream
- 100ml/4fl oz milk
- 2 eggs
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

YOU WILL NEED: A round deep-sided, 20.5cm/8in loose-bottom flan tin, parchment paper and baking beans

● Preheat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Roll out pastry on to a large, lightly floured board. Carefully lift up the pastry using a rolling pin and drape it into the tin to line, leaving some over the sides. Tuck it into the inner edges to secure. Line with parchment paper and baking beans and put in oven for about 15 to 20 mins, until edges are just turning golden. Remove from oven, remove paper and beans and put tart base back in oven for 2 mins to crisp up the base. Remove from oven and put aside. When cool enough to handle, trim the pastry edges.

● While that's cooking, add squash and oil to a large roasting tin and toss together. Put in the oven to roast for about 15 to 20 mins, or until squash is just tender. Remove, put aside to cool and turn down the oven to gas mark 4/180°C (160°C in a fan oven).

● Meanwhile, add kale to a pan of boiling, salted water and cook for about 15 to 20 mins. Drain and put aside to cool. Add the squash and kale to the pastry base, with the pine nuts and half the Gorgonzola. Sit tart on a baking sheet. Mix the cream, milk, eggs and nutmeg, if using, then pour it over the squash mixture to cover. Crumble over remaining Gorgonzola and put in the oven for about 30 to 35 mins. Allow tart to cool before slicing to serve.

PER SERVING: KCALS 379; FAT 28g;

SAT FAT 13g; CARBS 22g ➔

Try this

Prepare the filling
and pastry case in
advance. When ready
to serve, assemble
and cook.





REAL CHEESE



real character

Cheeky, tasty and oh so tempting...
For you and your little characters.



For Santa
and reindeers



Stuffed peppers with rice & feta

So tasty, even non-vegetarians will want to try one!

SERVES 8 PREP: 10 mins COOK: 2 hrs 10 mins TOTAL COST: £12.98

- 8 peppers, in a range of colours
- 6tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 300g/11oz rice
- Pinch of sugar
- Pinch of dried mint
- Pinch of ground cinnamon
- 6 tomatoes, whizzed in food processor
- Large handful of sultanas
- Handful of pine nuts
- 680g jar of passata
- 300g/11oz feta, crumbled
- Thyme leaves, for serving

● Preheat oven to gas mark 5/190°C (170°C in a fan oven). Prepare the peppers by slicing the tops off each one and removing the seeds. Put them to one side, reserving the tops. Heat 1tbsp of the oil in a large frying pan, add the onion, season and cook for 2 to 3 mins to soften. Stir in the garlic and cook for a further 1 min. Remove from heat, put aside and allow to cool.

● Once cool, stir the rice into the onions, along with sugar, dried mint, cinnamon and tomatoes. Mix until combined, add the sultanas and pine nuts, and stir.

● Sit peppers in a roasting tin (it's best if they fit fairly snugly). Divide rice

mixture between peppers then add 1tbsp of water to each one and sit the tops on. Pour passata into base of tin, then drizzle the rest of the oil liberally over peppers. Cover loosely with foil and

put in oven for about 2 hrs, or until rice is cooked and peppers are tender. Sprinkle most of the feta over the peppers for last 15 mins of cooking (you can lift up the tops, if you like). When ready, remove from oven and leave to sit for 10 mins.



Transfer to a serving plate with some of the tomato mixture at bottom of tin. To serve, sprinkle with remaining feta and garnish with thyme leaves. Serve warm. PER SERVING: KCALS 400; FAT 19g; SAT FAT 7g; CARBS 44g

Maple & rum-glazed ham

A delicious centrepiece that will easily serve a crowd.

SERVES 12 (plus leftovers) PREP: 15 mins, plus resting COOK: 3 hrs 30 mins TOTAL COST: £25.78

- About 3kg/6½lb unsmoked boneless gammon joint
- 1 onion, peeled and roughly chopped

- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 bay leaf
- Handful of black peppercorns

FOR THE GLAZE:

- 100g/3½oz demerara sugar, plus extra for sprinkling
- 50ml/2fl oz maple syrup
- Generous splash of rum
- Handful of cloves

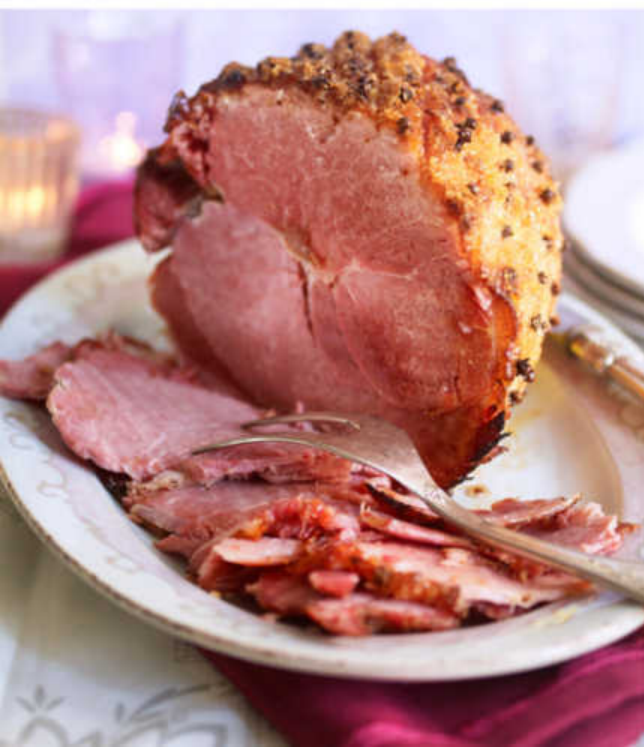
● Put gammon in a large lidded pan, cover with cold water and add onion, cinnamon stick, bay leaf and peppercorns. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and cook on a low simmer for about 2 hrs 30 mins to 3 hrs, with the lid ajar. You can skim any 'frothy' bits from the surface as you go. To check if ham is done, poke a sharp

knife into the middle of the flesh and the juices should run clear. Remove from heat and leave to cool (you can let it sit in the pan with the liquid, if you like).

● When cool enough, pull away the thick outer layer of skin, making sure you leave a thin layer of fat behind. With a sharp knife, score the ham in a criss-cross pattern and put aside.

● When ready to cook, preheat the oven to gas mark 5/190°C (170°C in a fan oven). To make the glaze, put sugar, maple syrup and rum into a small pan and heat gently. Brush it all over the ham and then stick a clove into the middle of each diamond shape. Sprinkle with extra sugar (this will give it a nice crust) and sit it in a roasting tin. Put in oven for 25 to 30 mins, or until golden brown. Remove from the oven, cover loosely with foil and leave to rest for 20 mins or so before slicing to serve.

PER SERVING: KCALS 144; FAT 7g; SAT FAT 2g; CARBS 4g ➔



FAB WINTER SALADS

Winter slaw with dates & oranges

SERVES 8 PREP: 20 mins

TOTAL COST: £9.03

- 1 red cabbage, halved and shredded
- 1 celeriac, peeled and shredded (or slice with a mandoline)
- 4 carrots, peeled and shredded (or slice with a mandoline)
- 1 large or 2 small fennel bulbs, trimmed and finely shredded
- Juice of ½ lemon
- Handful each of: ready-to-eat dates, stones out and roughly chopped; macadamia nuts, lightly toasted; dried cranberries (optional); fresh dill, finely chopped; parsley, finely chopped
- 2 oranges, segmented, for serving

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 250g pot Greek yoghurt
- 2tsp Dijon mustard
- 3tbsp mayonnaise

● Mix together the dressing ingredients and season. Check seasoning; put aside.
● Add the red cabbage, celeriac, carrots and fennel to a large bowl. Toss with the lemon juice and season lightly.
● When ready to serve, add the dates, nuts and cranberries, if using, then stir in the dressing and toss together. Add the herbs and toss again, taste and season some more, if needed. Transfer to a serving bowl, cover and keep in fridge until needed. Serve at room temperature, topped with the orange segments.

PER 100g SERVING: KCALS 165; FAT 9g; SAT FAT 2.5g; CARBS 12g

Try this
You can make this slaw ahead and refrigerate – just give it a little stir before serving.

Pasta, aubergine & chorizo salad

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins COOK: 35 mins

TOTAL COST: £11.28

- 400g/14oz chunky pasta shapes
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 2 x 200g pack cherry tomatoes
- 2 aubergines, roughly chopped
- 300g pack chorizo, cut into pieces
- 200g bag spinach

- 410g can each of borlotti beans and butterbeans, drained and rinsed

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 6tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2tbsp white wine vinegar
- 1-2tsp Dijon mustard
- Pinch of sugar (optional)

● Preheat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (190°C in a fan oven). Cook the pasta in a pan of salted water for about 12 mins, or until al dente. Drain and put aside.

● Add dressing ingredients to a bowl and mix. Season to taste; put aside.

● Meanwhile, add oil, tomatoes and aubergines to a roasting tin. Season and toss together. Put in the oven for 15 to 20 mins, adding the chorizo for the last 10 mins. Remove from oven and put aside.

● Tip the spinach into the roasting tin and stir gently until the spinach wilts. Add the spinach and the beans to the pasta, pour over the dressing and combine. Cover and put in fridge until needed. Serve at room temperature.

PER 100g SERVING: KCALS 500; FAT 22g; SAT FAT 6g; CARBS 48g

Farro with roasted pear & courgette

SERVES 8-10 PREP: 15 mins

COOK: 20 mins TOTAL COST: £8.76

- 200g bag of farro (grain found in health food shops and supermarkets)
- 4 pears, cored and sliced into wedges
- 3 courgettes, roughly chopped
- 2 red onions, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1tbsp olive oil
- Handful each of: flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped; pistachio nuts, roughly chopped

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 6tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2tbsp white wine vinegar
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed
- 1-2tsp Dijon mustard
- Handful of flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

● Add the farro to a pan. Cover with water, season and bring to the boil. Then reduce to a simmer and cook for about 20 mins, or until tender. Drain and put aside.

● Meanwhile, preheat the oven to gas mark 5/190°C (170°C in a fan oven).

In a large roasting tin, add the pears, courgettes and red onions. Toss with olive oil, season and put in the oven to roast for about 15 mins, or until tender.

● Mix together the dressing ingredients, season and pour over the farro.

Combine the two mixtures. You can do this while the farro is still warm so it absorbs the flavours. Add the pears and veg to the farro, along with the parsley and pistachios. Combine, then cover and keep in fridge until needed. When ready to use, transfer to a serving bowl and serve at room temperature.

PER 100g SERVING: KCALS 241-192;

FAT 10-8g; SAT FAT 1.5-1g; CARBS 31-25g

Try this

Serve your salads with rye bread and bowls of freshly cooked beetroot.

Potato salad with smoked salmon

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 min COOK: 20 mins

TOTAL COST: £9.13

- 800g/1lb 12oz potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 celeriac, peeled and finely sliced (optional)
- Bunch of spring onions, trimmed and finely chopped
- 4 large gherkins in vinegar, drained and finely sliced

- 400g pack of smoked salmon, finely sliced
- Handful of fresh dill leaves, roughly chopped, plus torn leaves for garnish

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 3tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1tbsp white wine vinegar
- 100ml/4fl oz sour cream
- 1tsp Dijon mustard

● Cook potatoes in pan of salted water until just fork tender. Drain well; put aside.

● Mix together the dressing ingredients and season to taste. Put aside.

● When ready to assemble, add the celeriac, spring onions and gherkins to the potatoes and turn carefully, making sure you don't break up the potatoes. Now, add the dressing and combine again. Add the smoked salmon and dill and give it a final mix. Cover and put in fridge until needed. When ready to serve, transfer the salad to a serving bowl and top with the reserved dill. This dish is best served at room temperature.

PER 100g SERVING: KCALS 273; FAT 11g; SAT FAT 3g; CARBS 23g

COMFORT & JOY

Treat your guests or spoil the family over the holidays with one of these fantastic showstopper desserts



Meringue cake with coffee cream

This indulgent dessert makes a great centrepiece.

SERVES 8 PREP: 30 mins

COOK: 30 mins, plus cooling

- 4 egg whites
- 225g/8oz caster sugar
- Large handful of hazelnuts, toasted and chopped
- Icing sugar, sifted, for dusting
- Few cherries, for topping (optional)

FOR THE FILLING:

- 300ml pot double cream, lightly whipped
- 1tbsp icing sugar, sifted
- 1-2tbsp fresh strong coffee (made in a cafetière)

YOU WILL NEED: 2 large baking sheets, lined with baking parchment

● Heat oven to gas $\frac{1}{4}$ /110°C (90°C in a fan oven). First, draw 4 circles on the parchment paper (2 on each) about 20.5cm/8in in diameter. Add egg whites to the bowl of a food mixer and, using the whisk attachment, whisk until soft peaks form. Slowly add caster sugar and whisk until it forms stiff peaks. Divide mixture equally between each circle and smooth out. Bake in oven for about 30 mins (do not let them brown at all), then turn off the oven and leave the meringues inside for a few hours until

cool. Remove and put to one side.

● For the filling, divide cream evenly between 2 bowls. Add icing sugar and coffee to 1 bowl for the coffee cream.

● To assemble, sit 1 meringue, flat-side down, on a serving plate. Gently spread over some coffee cream, then plain cream. Add another meringue, flat-side down. Repeat until all meringues and cream have been used, finishing with a plain meringue. Sprinkle over hazelnuts, dust with icing sugar and top with cherries, if using. Slice to serve.

PER SERVING: KCALS 355; FAT 24g; SAT FAT 13g; CARBS 31g

NO-BAKE CHEESECAKE!

Chocolate & Baileys cheesecake

So simple to make, this tastes as good as it looks.

SERVES 8-10 PREP: 20 mins, plus overnight setting COOK: 5 mins

- 75g/3oz butter, melted
- 200g/7oz digestive biscuits, crushed

FOR THE FILLING:

- 4 sheets of gelatine
- 2 x 180g tubs cream cheese
- 250g pot ricotta
- 200ml/7fl oz double cream
- 100g/3½oz icing sugar, sifted, plus extra for dusting (optional)
- 1tbsp vanilla paste
- 3tbsp Baileys
- 100g bar dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids), broken into even pieces
- 1tbsp cocoa, for dusting
- 150g carton fresh raspberries, to serve

YOU WILL NEED: A 20.5cm/8in round, deep, loose-bottom spring-form cake tin, lightly greased and base lined with baking parchment

● Melt the butter in a small pan, then stir in the biscuits. Spoon mixture into tin, and level with the back of a spoon. When cool, put in fridge to firm up.

● Add 2 sheets of gelatine (broken up) into a small bowl and cover with a little water to soften. Add cream cheese, ricotta, cream and icing sugar to bowl of a food mixer and beat together until combined. Beat in vanilla and Baileys. Remove half the mixture to a bowl and refrigerate. Drain and squeeze out the water from soaked gelatine, then add a little boiling water and beat with a fork to remove lumps. Add to mixture in food mixer; beat until combined and smooth. Pour this mixture on to the biscuit base and put in fridge for a few hours to set.

● For chocolate layer, soak remaining

gelatine as before. Add remaining cheesecake mixture to food mixer bowl. Put chocolate in a heatproof bowl, sit it over a pan of barely simmering water and stir until melted. Leave to cool for a few mins, then add to cheesecake mixture (in the food mixer bowl) and beat to combine. Squeeze out excess water from gelatine, repeat as before, and add to chocolate mixture. Beat again until smooth, then pour over the top of the set cheesecake. Put back in fridge and chill overnight. When ready to serve, dust with cocoa, run a knife around the edge of the tin, then release from tin and put on a serving plate or cake stand. Top with raspberries and dust with icing sugar, if you like.

PER SERVING: KCALS 616-493; FAT 45-36g; SAT FAT 27-22g; CARBS 40-32g ➔





Try this...

You could sprinkle a few cake crumbs over the top for decoration, if you like.

Red velvet layered raspberry trifle

The perfect pud for feeding a crowd!

SERVES 12-14 PREP: 30 mins, plus overnight setting COOK: 45 mins

- 175g/6oz butter, softened
- 175g/6oz caster sugar
- 3 eggs
- 125g/4oz self-raising flour
- 1tsp baking powder
- 25g/1oz cocoa powder
- 1tbsp red food colouring
- 2-3tbsp dry sherry (use more if you like it boozy), or use cherry brandy
- 4 x 150g punnets fresh raspberries, or use frozen
- 135g pack strawberry jelly
- 500ml carton fresh vanilla custard
- 300ml carton double cream, lightly whipped
- Handful of silver-coated sugared

almonds (dragées), from Italian delis or cake decoration shops (optional)

YOU WILL NEED: A 20.5cm/8in round loose-bottom spring-form cake tin, or 3 same-size sandwich tins, greased and lined with baking parchment

● Heat oven to gas mark 4/180°C (160°C in a fan oven). First, make the cake: add butter and sugar to the bowl of a food mixer and beat for 10 mins until white and creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating mixture as you add each – to stop it curdling, add a little flour. Fold in the remaining flour, plus the baking powder and cocoa, then mix in the food colouring. Spoon mixture into cake tin (or tins) and bake in the oven for 25 to 45 mins until cake is spongy to the touch

and a skewer comes out clean when inserted into the middle (a single cake tin will need the longer baking time). Take out of oven, remove from tin and peel away parchment. Leave to cool.

● Slice single cake into 3. Add 1 layer to a trifle bowl, pour over sherry and tip in 1 punnet of raspberries. Make up jelly according to pack instructions, pour over and leave to cool. Refrigerate overnight.

● Pour some custard over jelly, add another cake layer, and top with more raspberries, some cream and the final cake layer. Add remaining raspberries, custard and cream and top with dragées, if using.

PER SERVING: KCALS 420-360; FAT 28-25g; SAT FAT 17-15g; CARBS 32-28g

NO-COOK DESSERT

Rum & raisin frozen pud This easy dessert is made from freezer and storecupboard staples.

SERVES 8 PREP: 10 mins, plus overnight freezing

- 1l carton good-quality vanilla ice cream
- 100g/3½oz raisins
- 100g bag dried cherries or cranberries
- Handful of pistachio nuts, shelled
- About 2-3tbsp rum
- Pinch of mixed spice

FOR THE TOPPING:

- 100g bar white chocolate, broken into even pieces
- Fresh cranberries or redcurrants, to decorate (optional)
- Holly leaves, to decorate (optional)
- Dusting of icing sugar, sifted, to decorate (optional)

YOU WILL NEED: A 1l pudding basin, lightly oiled and lined with cling film

● Remove ice cream from freezer and leave it to soften a little (not too much or the dried fruit will sink to the bottom when you add it). When soft, put in a bowl and tip in raisins, cherries, nuts, rum and mixed spice. Combine carefully to evenly distribute fruit.

● Spoon mixture into a pudding basin, pack it down and level the top. Freeze overnight until solid. Cover top loosely with cling film and foil once just frozen.

● When ready to serve, add chocolate to a heatproof bowl and sit it over a pan of barely simmering hot water, stirring occasionally until it melts.

Remove from heat and set aside. Take pudding out of freezer, remove foil and cling film from top and loosen edges with a knife, then invert on to a serving plate or cake stand. Remove pudding basin and peel away cling film. Spoon over the melted chocolate (it should set almost as soon as it hits the frozen pudding). Top with berries, holly leaves and a dusting of icing sugar, if using, and serve immediately.

PER SERVING: KCALS 288; FAT 12g; SAT FAT 6g; CARBS 37g

Tip If the pudding isn't coming away from the bowl easily, put a warm tea towel over the bowl for a few secs to help to ease it out.



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DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START? OUR NO-FUSS, MEAT-FREE RECIPES WILL MAKE LIGHT WORK OF A SHOWSTOPPING VEGGIE SUPPER

NEWSLETTER

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**SMOKED SALMON
MAC & CHEESE**



**CORONATION TURKEY &
DRIED FRUIT BAGUETTES**

LOVE YOUR LEFTOVERS

Turn what's left from all that feasting into something warm and wonderful. Turkey, ham and salmon aren't just for Christmas Day!



**CREAMY STILTON &
MUSHROOM RISOTTO**



**HAM, CABBAGE &
CHESTNUT SOUP**

Coronation turkey & dried fruit baguettes

SERVES 4 PREP: 15 mins
TOTAL COST: £5.04

200ml/7fl oz mayonnaise
200ml/7fl oz Greek yoghurt
2tbsp curry powder
Splash of Worcestershire sauce

2tbsp mango chutney
Handful of sultanas
Large handful of leftover turkey breast, shredded
4 small baguettes or crusty rolls, for serving
Handful of salad leaves, for serving

1 In a bowl, mix together the mayonnaise and yoghurt, then stir in the curry powder. Season and mix so the curry powder is combined.

2 Add the Worcestershire sauce, mango chutney and sultanas. Taste and add more



Worcestershire sauce, if you like, then stir in turkey, making sure that it is coated well.

3 Slice the baguettes in half lengthways and lightly toast or griddle all 8 halves. Top 4 halves with salad leaves and turkey mixture. Place remaining halves on top to serve.

PER SERVING: KCALS 680; FAT 45g; SAT FAT 7g; CARBS 40g

TRY THIS: The flavours will get even better over time, so make the sauce in advance and keep it in the fridge.

Ham, cabbage & chestnut soup

SERVES 4 PREP: 15 mins COOK: 30 mins
TOTAL COST: £5.05

1tbsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
3 celery stalks, finely chopped
3 carrots, peeled and finely chopped
1 bay leaf
180g vacuum-packed chestnuts, roughly chopped (optional)
1l/1¾pt hot vegetable stock
1 dark green cabbage, halved and roughly shredded
Large handful of leftover ham

1 Heat oil in a large heavy based pan, add onion and season well. Cook for 1 to 2 mins before adding the garlic. Cook for 1 min further.

2 Stir in the celery, carrots and bay leaf and cook for 5 mins until softened. Stir through the chestnuts, pour



in the stock and bring to the boil, then reduce to a simmer.

3 Add cabbage and cook on a low simmer for about 20 mins. Add ham and stir well so it heats through. Ladle the soup into bowls and serve alongside some warm crusty bread.

PER SERVING: KCALS 256; FAT 6g; SAT FAT 1.5g; CARBS 31g

TRY THIS: You could make the soup base ahead and simply add the ham when you're ready to serve.

Smoked salmon mac & cheese

SERVES 4 PREP: 15 mins COOK: 30 mins
TOTAL COST: £5.12

500g/1lb 2oz macaroni
Knob of butter
1tbsp plain flour
500ml/18fl oz milk
2tsp Dijon mustard
125g/4oz Cheddar, grated
1 small red onion, very finely chopped (optional)
Large handful of leftover smoked salmon, sliced into bite-sized pieces

1 Preheat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Cook macaroni in a pan of salted water for about 12 mins or until al dente.

2 Meanwhile, make the sauce. Heat the butter in a pan, then remove from heat and stir in the flour. Return to heat and pour in milk, a little at a time, while stirring. Use a balloon



whisk to do this, if you like, to prevent any lumps. Season and add mustard and cheese.

3 Strain cooked macaroni and return to pan, tossing with a little of the cooking water. Add the sauce to the macaroni and stir until combined. Stir in red onion, if using, and smoked salmon. Spoon into a large ovenproof dish or individual ones and put in the oven for about 15 mins, or until golden. Serve with salad.

PER SERVING: KCALS 606; FAT 10g; SAT FAT 4.5g; CARBS 100g

Creamy Stilton & mushroom risotto

SERVES 4 PREP: 10 mins COOK: 30 mins
TOTAL COST: £5.18

About 1l/1¾pt hot vegetable stock (you may need more)
Knob of butter
2tbsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
2 or 3 sage leaves, chopped
400g/14oz risotto rice
Splash of dry sherry (optional)
250g pack of chestnut mushrooms, sliced
Few thyme stalks, leaves only
125g/4oz leftover Stilton, crumbled

1 Add the stock to a large pan and heat on a low simmer. Heat butter and 1tbsp of the oil in a large deep-sided frying pan. Add the onion, season and cook for 1 to 2 mins. Stir in garlic and sage and cook for 1 min further.

2 Stir through the rice so all grains are coated with buttery



juices. Add sherry, if using, and bubble for 1 min then add a couple of ladles of hot stock. Continue to cook for 18 to 20 mins, stirring occasionally and topping up with stock, until rice is just cooked and mixture is creamy. Use more stock, if needed.

3 Meanwhile, heat remaining oil in a separate frying pan and add mushrooms and thyme. Cook for 2 to 3 mins then stir into cooked risotto. Sprinkle over the Stilton, stir and serve.

PER SERVING: KCALS 580; FAT 19g; SAT FAT 9g; CARBS 84g



ALL READY
IN 30
MINUTES!



HOT DOGS WITH QUICK
TOMATO KETCHUP



VIETNAMESE-STYLE
PRAWN PANCAKES

QUICK & TASTY TV DINNERS

Over the festive season, there's lots of unmissable telly – permission to slouch on the couch granted with one of these speedy, lap-top suppers!



MUSHROOM BURGERS



ROAST CAULIFLOWER
AND BEAN FAJITAS

Dinners in a dash

Vietnamese-style prawn pancakes

SERVES 4 PREP: 10 mins, plus chilling COOK: 15 mins
TOTAL COST: £8.17

2 baby cos lettuce, shredded
250g pack ready-cooked small prawns
200g pack bean sprouts
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely sliced in strips (optional)

Handful of coriander leaves

FOR THE PANCAKES:

200g/7oz rice flour
300ml/1½pt coconut milk
About 250ml/9fl oz water
2tsp turmeric
About 2-3tbsp groundnut or rapeseed oil

FOR THE DRESSING:

2tbsp rice vinegar
2tbsp fish sauce
Juice of 1 lime, to taste
Pinch of sugar, to taste

1 First, combine all the dressing ingredients; season. Set aside.



2 Beat together all the pancake ingredients (except the oil) until smooth. If too thick, thin with extra water, then put in the fridge for 10 mins. Heat a little oil in a small frying pan and add a little batter, tilting to cover in a thin layer. Cook for 1 min or until crispy; transfer to a plate. Repeat with rest of mix.
3 Top each pancake with lettuce, prawns, bean sprouts, chilli and a drizzle of dressing. Add coriander and serve.

PER SERVING: KCALS 417; FAT 19g; SAT FAT 11.5g; CARBS 43g

Roast cauliflower and bean fajitas

SERVES 4 PREP: 10 mins COOK: 20 mins
TOTAL COST: £6.69

1 cauliflower, cut into florets
1tsp ground cumin
1tsp ground paprika
2tbsp olive oil
1 red onion, finely chopped, plus extra, sliced, to serve
410g can black eyed beans, drained and rinsed
400g can chopped tomatoes
Splash of Tabasco, to taste
8 flour tortilla wraps (warmed in oven or on griddle pan)
Coriander leaves, for garnish
Lime wedges, to serve

1 Heat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Add cauliflower to a roasting tin and season. Mix spices with half the oil, drizzle over the cauliflower and toss to coat. Cook in oven for about 15 mins until tender and just turning golden. Remove and set aside.



2 While that's cooking, heat remaining oil in a heavy-based pan. Add chopped onion, season and cook for 1 to 2 mins until softening, then stir in beans, tomatoes and Tabasco. Bring to the boil, then reduce heat and cook for 10 to 15 mins until thickened. Remove from the heat and put to one side.
3 Spoon some bean mixture on half of each tortilla, top with cauliflower, sliced onion and coriander, fold over and serve with a lime wedge.

PER SERVING: KCALS 550; FAT 15g; SAT FAT 4g; CARBS 78g

Hot dogs with quick tomato ketchup

SERVES 4 PREP: 10 mins COOK: 20 mins
TOTAL COST: £6.97

Drizzle of olive oil

8 good-quality pork sausages

8 finger rolls, sliced open

Mustard, to serve (optional)

FOR THE ONIONS:

1tbsp olive oil

2-3 onions, peeled and sliced
FOR THE KETCHUP:

2 handfuls of cherry tomatoes

2tsp dark brown sugar

2tsp white wine vinegar

Worcestershire sauce, to taste

1 Heat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Add oil to a roasting tin, then sausages, rolling in oil. Cook in oven for 20 mins until golden (turn after 10 mins). Set aside.

2 While sausages are cooking, heat oil in a pan, add onions, season and stir. Cook on a low heat for 15 mins until golden,



stirring occasionally so they don't burn. Remove from heat.

3 To make the ketchup, halve tomatoes and add to a pan; heat gently. Add remaining ingredients, bring to the boil and cook for a few mins, then remove from heat. Leave to cool for 1 min, then whizz in a food processor until smooth. Transfer to a serving pot. Add some onions, a sausage and mustard, if using, to each roll. Serve ketchup on the side.

PER SERVING: KCALS 602; FAT 29g; SAT FAT 10g; CARBS 58g

Mushroom burgers

MAKES 8 PREP: 10 mins COOK: 20 mins
TOTAL COST: £6.92

200g pack mushrooms
Handful of white breadcrumbs
Handful of thyme sprigs, plus extra for garnish
50g/2oz Parmesan, grated

1 egg, lightly beaten

Flour, for dusting

About 2tbsp olive oil

8 bread rolls, split in half

Crisp lettuce leaves, to serve

Sliced tomato and red onion, to serve

1 Add mushrooms to a food processor and pulse until chopped. Add breadcrumbs, thyme and Parmesan and blitz until combined (leave it a little chunky for texture).

2 Drizzle in the egg and pulse until mixture comes together. With floured hands, scoop out even-sized balls of mixture



and flatten into burgers. Sit them on a plate and put in the fridge until ready to cook.

3 Heat a little oil in a frying pan and cook the burgers, a few at a time, for 4 to 5 mins or until golden brown. Turn over and cook for a few mins more. Repeat until all burgers are cooked. To assemble, top each roll with lettuce, a burger, tomato, onion and extra thyme sprigs. Serve with your choice of sauce (see ketchup recipe above).

PER SERVING: KCALS 250; FAT 8g; SAT FAT 2.5g; CARBS 33g





Hearty & healthy

After the indulgence of Christmas, January will be the time most of us try to eat better. You can fill up and watch the calories by eating hearty winter salads – my favourite is shredded kale with chicory and apple. And, if it's warming comfort food you're craving, soups fit the bill; beetroot, celeriac and Jerusalem artichokes are all in season now. Simmer with your choice of herbs or spices to jazz it up, then blitz.

SPREAD THE LOVE

I love this delish new jam, made from 100% coconut. It's sublime spread on toast and has a smooth buttery taste, so you only need a little – plus, it's low GI and 0% cholesterol. What's not to love?

• Coconut jam, £5.94 for 330g, Coconut Merchant or Amazon



If you love nuts, you must try almond butter. It's roasted ground almonds made into a smooth spreadable paste – ideal for an afternoon energy pick-me-up!

• Meridian almond butter, £3.99 for 170g, supermarkets

Winter warmers
Don't fancy making your own soup? Then tuck into one of these bowls of warming goodness...



1 **Yorkshire Provender Beetroot Soup with Horseradish** (£2.49 for 600g, supermarkets). A mix of sweet beets and parsnips

gives this soup a great taste, with a hint of horseradish to round it off. Plus, it's both gluten and sugar free.

2 **Glorious! Mumbai Lentil & Chickpea**

(£2.30 for 600g, Ocado, Sainsbury's and Waitrose). A really filling dahl soup with spinach and a subtle hint of ginger. Delicious.



3 **New Covent Garden Soup Co Chicken & Leek with Pinhead Oats** (£2.10 for 600g, supermarkets).

Nourishing winter soup with plenty of chicken flavour and a good texture. Only 198 calories per serving!



Cook it, eat it, love it!

Waste not, want not...

Once Christmas is over, turn your leftover cake and pudding into a delicious treat.

- Use your Christmas cake as a base for a trifle with fresh orange segments, custard and cream.
- Mix Christmas pud with vanilla ice cream and freeze. Trickle over a little brandy to serve.
- Layer Christmas cake as you would a bread and butter pud – mix with egg and cream mixture, and bake. Serve warm.

- Whip up some truffles – soak Christmas cake in brandy and roll into balls. Then, dip or roll in melted dark chocolate and put in the fridge to firm.



The mini spiralizer

Planning to cut back on your carbs in the New Year?

You can easily make vegetable spaghetti and noodles using this new smaller size hand-held spiralizer. It makes great courgette spirals – delish tossed with ricotta and chilli flakes.

• Oxo Good Grips Hand-held Spiralizer, £15, John Lewis



Book of the month

The Scandi Kitchen by Brontë Aurell (Ryland Peters & Small, £16.99). If you love Nordic crime dramas and can't get enough of the culture, you can now immerse yourself in the region's delicious food! Recipes span Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and include authentic goodies such as Kladdkaka cake, a cinnamon bun wreath and Swedish meatballs. *Fantastisk!*



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SEE OVER THE PAGE FOR OUR FAB 12-PAGE MAKES SECTION 

EXCLUSIVE PATTERN

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BE MAGIC IN A LITTLE JACKET

Meet the perfect cover-up for any outfit. It's easy to make in a variety of fabrics, from sheers to faux fur

1 Up the style factor with sheer sleeves and showstopping trousers.

Silk **cami**, £22, 8-16, Oasis. Wide-leg **trousers**, £75, 8-16, Great Plains. Strappy **sandals**, £19.99, 3-8, Deichmann. **Earrings**, £12, Accessorize. **Clutch**, £49.90, United Colors of Benetton

2 Glam faux fur is the perfect partner for a pretty party dress, and it keeps the cold at bay.

Organza **dress**, £165, 6-18, Coast. **Earrings**, £12, Jon Richard. **Heels**, £85, 3-8, Dune

3 Not into baring your upper arms? Lace sleeves cover them up elegantly and look special enough for after dark.

Lace **jumpsuit**, £119, 6-18, Coast. **Earrings**, £10, Jon Richard. Silver **clutch**, £45, Coast. Sequin **sandals**, £85, 3-8, Ravel

4 A chic velvet topper will give last year's party outfit a whole new lease of life.

Lace **top**, £119, 6-18, Coast. Full **skirt**, £44.99, 6-16, Chi Chi London. **Earrings**, £12, Debenhams. Diamante **heels**, £45, 3-9, Next



Feature: Janet Palmer **Photos:** Andy Parsons at Hearst Studios
Styling: Helen Johnson **Hair and make-up:** Anna Durston
Illustrations: Terry Evans

Get making!

NEED TO KNOW

WOMEN'S SIZES 10-20

FABRICS

We used silk/viscose velvet from Cloth House, Tocca lace by John Kaldor from Minerva Crafts, faux fur from The Berwick Street Cloth Shop and spot detail chiffon from Misan Fabrics.

INSTRUCTIONS

The pattern pieces, cutting layouts and sewing instructions are all on the Prima pattern.



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call 0906 344 6851* (or, from the Republic of Ireland, 1560 716 141*).

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For where to buy, see page 160

PRIMA.CO.UK | January 2016 127

LISA COMFORT



Stuck for a last-minute gift for a friend? Whizz up a lovely jewellery roll from a few scraps of fabric. Simple!

CUSTOMISES IT!



JEWELLERY ROLL

This project is perfect for a rainy afternoon – especially if, like me, you have lots of small scraps of fabric lying around. And, as it's not too tricky, why not make two? Wrap one up for a friend or loved one this Christmas, and keep the other for yourself!

YOU WILL NEED

- Scraps of fabric
- Scissors
- Iron
- Sewing machine
- Pins
- Ruler
- Tailor's chalk
- Zip (6 inches, or shorten a longer zip)
- Bias binding
- Ribbon
- Needle and thread
- Press stud



THE STEPS

1 Cut out two rectangles of fabric, measuring 15cm x 25cm. At one end, curve off the corners (this will be the top of the jewellery roll). Then, cut out a third rectangle, measuring 10cm x 7cm.

2 Take the small rectangle and press over a 1cm seam allowance on all edges. Along one of the long edges, stitch the seam allowance down. This will become the top of the pocket.



3 Take one of the larger rectangles and lay it flat on a surface. Pin the pocket 3cm up from the bottom edge, centring it across the width of the rectangle. Make sure the stitched edge of the pocket is at the top.



4 Edgestitch in place around the other three sides of the pocket. Then, stitch down the middle to divide it in two.



5 Using a ruler and tailor's chalk, draw a 10cm line, approximately 5cm

down from the top edge of the fabric, making sure it's parallel with the top edge of the pocket. At both ends of the line, draw two diagonal lines to create 'V' shapes.



6 Cut along the line and the Vs. Turn the fabric over to the wrong side and fold over the cut edges, creating a thin rectangular gap. Press in place.



7 Take the zip and position it in the gap. Then, pin it in place. Make sure the zip is facing the right way up so you can open it from the right side of the fabric.



8 Next, edgestitch around the gap, stitching the zip in place.



9 Using the tailor's chalk and ruler, draw in the pocket size you would like, beneath the zip.

10 Take the remaining large rectangle and place it wrong sides together with the rectangle with zip and pockets. Pin the raw edges together. Machine tack in place with a 5mm seam allowance.



11 Unfold one edge of the bias binding. Pin to the raw edges of the rectangles, starting at one long edge and finishing at the other (leaving bottom edge free). Fold ribbon in half and tuck under the bias binding. Pin in place. Stitch around edges, in the crease of the bias binding.



12 Fold the bias binding over the raw edges to the other side. Then pin the folded edge in place. It should cover the machine tack from step 10 and the stitching from step 11. Edgestitch down or hand sew in place with a slip stitch.

13 Repeat steps 11 and 12 with the bottom edge, binding it in the same way.

This time, fold under the raw edges at either end of the binding, so it's neat.

14 Following the chalk lines, stitch the pocket shape in place, sewing through both layers of fabric.

15 If you have some fabric left over, you could make an optional ring holder. Fold a strip of fabric in half lengthways and stitch right sides together. Turn through. Tuck under one end and hand stitch on to inside of the jewellery roll. Trim the strip down, tuck the other end under and attach a press stud to the end. Lay flat and match up with the other side of the press stud on the jewellery roll. Stitch in place.

16 Wrap it up for someone special!

'It's so easy to turn a few scraps of fabric into a lovely jewellery roll'

MAKE AND BE MERRY!

These quick and easy ideas
are perfect for a last-minute gift
or to add cheer to your home

Easy
make



GOLDEN WONDERS

Turn plain china into something pretty and serve your tea in style

YOU WILL NEED

- Masking tape
- Paint brush
- Cups and saucers
- White acrylic paint
- Scissors
- Mod Podge
- Newspaper
- Dishwasher-Safe Gloss
- Gold spray paint

TO MAKE

1 Use masking tape to create triangular shapes on each cup (as shown above). Make the shapes different sizes and heights to add interest. Press along the edges of the tape so no paint can seep underneath.

2 Cover the rest of the cups and the insides with more tape or newspaper. In a well-ventilated area (preferably outside), give the cups a light coating of spray paint. Leave to dry completely before giving them a second coat. You may only need one coat.

3 Once cups are dry, carefully remove the tape and newspaper to reveal the geometric shapes. Using a paint brush, add tiny white 'snow' dots of paint all over the gold area. Leave to dry thoroughly.

4 Place the saucers face down on to newspaper and give them one or two coats of gold spray paint. Leave to dry.

5 Once the paint is completely dry, seal the cups and saucers with Mod Podge sealant. Leave to dry.

• Cup and saucer, £4 for set, Wilko. Gold spray paint, £8.99 for 400ml, PlastiKote. Mod Podge Dishwasher-Safe Gloss, £8.99, Amazon. Tray, £19.99, TK Maxx



Not too tricky!

A SPOONFUL OF FUN!

Brighten up your utensil rack with some découpage

YOU WILL NEED

- Scissors
- Mod Podge
- Decorative papers
- Dishwasher-Safe Gloss (glue)
- Retro images
- Old utensils
- Paint brush
- Twine

TO MAKE

1 Cut decorative paper into small pieces and cut out retro images.

2 Use a paint brush to apply glue on to the utensils. Place the paper pieces, smoothing out as you go, until all are firmly glued in place. Cover each utensil in separate designs. Leave to dry. Then, glue your chosen retro image in place.

3 Once dry, tie twine on to the utensils and hang from a rack for decoration.

• Decopatch paper, from £3.79 for 3 sheets; twine, from £2, both Hobbycraft →

Not too
tricky!

SWEET TREATS

Children will love these cute sweetie jars – especially when filled with treats!

YOU WILL NEED

- Empty jars
- Acrylic paint
- Masking tape
- Paint brush
- Blackboard spray paint
- Sweets
- Twine
- Scalpel
- Chalk

TO MAKE

- 1 Remove any labels from the jars and give them a good clean.
- 2 Use masking tape to make a heart shape on each jar. Press the edges of the tape down firmly so paint can't seep underneath. Tape up the tops of the jars.
- 3 In a well-ventilated area (preferably outside), give the jars a coat of blackboard spray paint. Leave the jars to dry before applying a second coat of paint.
- 4 Once jars are dry, remove the masking tape hearts. Use

a scalpel to get the tape away from the glass before peeling.

- 5 Paint dots around the heart and tie some twine around the tops of the jars. Fill with sweets and use chalk to write personal messages on the lids, if you like.

• *Blackboard spray paint, £6.94, B&Q*



JUMPER ROUND

Upcycle patterned sweaters into colourful cosy cushions

YOU WILL NEED

- Woolly jumpers
- Scissors
- Needle
- Thread
- Cushion pads or wadding
- Covered button kit (we used Prym)

TO MAKE

1 For each cushion, cut the arms off a jumper. Sew up the sleeve holes, or cut across the jumper from one arm hole to the other, so you're left with a tube.

2 Sew a running stitch along the top edge of the tube using double thread. Pull the thread in tight to gather up the top and stitch to secure. Insert the cushion pad and repeat the gathering along the bottom. Manipulate into a round shape.

3 Cover buttons using wool from the sleeves and your kit. Follow instructions, then pull tight and secure a button in the centre of each cushion.

• Prym button kit, £3, Hobbycraft

Use your skills

WINTER WISH LIST

New year, new start



Christmas Rose & Freesia



Christmas Garden

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THE TWISTER

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The Twister gracefully adds an element of fluidity to your wardrobe, whilst at the same time, provides you with an enduringly versatile cropped style sweater. Team with your favourite jeans,

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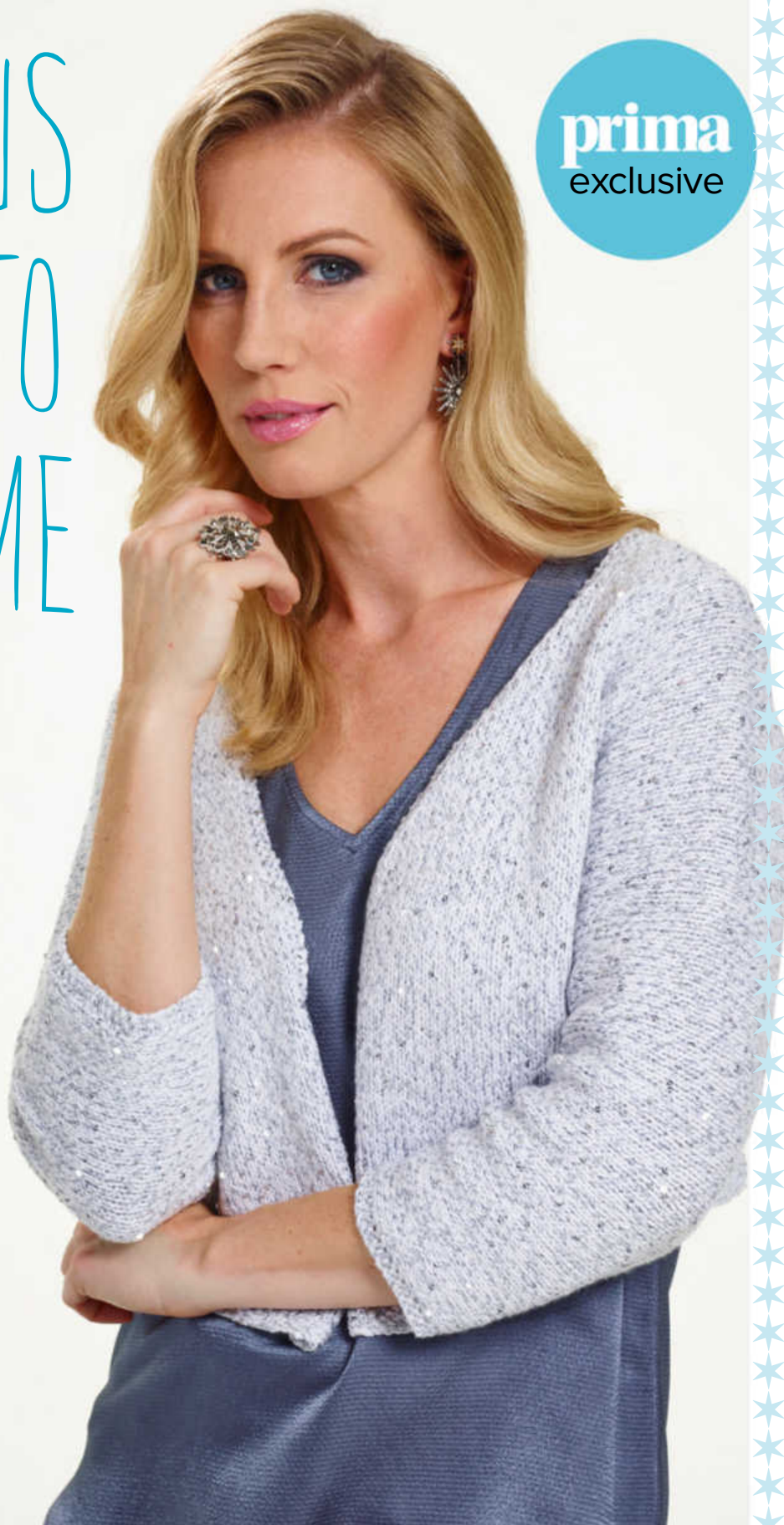
Get making!

prima
exclusive

GORGEOUS KNITS TO WELCOME 2016

We have some lovely
tops for you to mark
the start of the new year.
Choose from a sparkly
bolero and a smart
contrast-sleeve sweater

TURN THE PAGE FOR
FULL INSTRUCTIONS 



Get making!

SPARKLY BOLERO

This cute cover-up is perfect for festive family get-togethers.

MEASUREMENTS

To fit bust 81-86(92-97:102-107)cm.
Finished measurements: Width across back 47(52:57)cm; Length to back neck 37(39:41)cm; Sleeve seam 30cm for all sizes.

MATERIALS

7(8:9) 50g balls of Sirdar Soukie in Mother of Pearl 178.
Pair of 3.75mm knitting needles.
3.75mm circular needle 120cm long.

TENSION

23 sts and 32 rows to 10cm square over st-st using 3.75mm needles.

ABBREVIATIONS

beg beginning; **cm** centimetres; **cont** continue; **foll** following; **k** knit; **p** purl; **rep** repeat; **RS** right side; **sl** slip; **ssk** [slip 1] twice, insert tip of left hand needle from left to right through the fronts of both slipped sts and work 2 tog; **st(s)** stitch(es); **st-st** stocking stitch; **tog** together; **WS** wrong side.

RIGHT FRONT

With 3.75mm needles, cast on 51(57:63) sts. **Moss st row** K1, [p1, k1] to end. Rep this row 3 times more.

Shape lower front

Next row (RS) K1, p1, k5, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, p3, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k9, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, p7, k1, p1, k1. Taking 4 sts more into work on every RS row, cont in this way until the following 2 rows have been worked: K1, p1, k41(45:49), turn. Sl 1, p39(43:47), k1, p1, k1. **Next row (RS)** K1, p1, k to end. **Next row** P to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. Rep the last 2 rows until the side edge measures 18(19:20)cm from cast on edge, ending with a WS row **.

Shape sleeve and front neck

Next row (RS) K1, p1, k1, ssk, k to end. **Next row** Cast on 6 sts, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. Rep the last 2 rows 4(6:6) times. 76(92:98) sts. **Next row (RS)** K1, p1, k to end. **Next row** Cast on 6 sts, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1,

ssk, k to end. **Next row** Cast on 6 sts, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. Rep the last 4 rows 1(0:0) time more. 98(103:109) sts. **Next row (RS)** K1, p1, k to end. **Next row** Cast on 6 sts, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, ssk, k to end. **Next row** Cast on 10 sts, k1, p1, k1, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. 113(118:124) sts. Place a marker at beg of last row. **Next row (RS)** K1, p1, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, ssk, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. Rep the last 4 rows 7(8:10) times more. 105(109:113) sts. Cont without further shaping for a few rows until piece measures 19(20:21)cm from **, ending with a WS row. Place a marker at beg of last row and leave sts on a holder.

LEFT FRONT

With 3.75mm needles, cast on 51(57:63) sts. **Moss st row** K1, [p1, k1] to end. Rep this row 3 times more.

Shape lower front

Next row (RS) K to last 2 sts, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p4, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, k4, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p8, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, k8, p1, k1. Cont in this way, taking 4 sts more into work on every WS row, until the rows: "K1, p1, k1, k40(44:48), turn. Sl 1, p38(42:46), p1, k1." have been worked. **Next row (WS)** P to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k to end. Rep the last 2 rows until the side edge measures 18(19:20)cm from cast on edge, ending with a WS row **.

Shape sleeve and front neck

Next row (RS) Cast on 6 sts, k to last 5 sts, k2tog, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to end. Rep the last 2 rows 4(6:6) times. 76(92:98) sts. **Next row** Cast on 6 sts, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to end. **Next row** Cast on 6 sts, k to last 5 sts, k2tog, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to end. Rep the last 4 rows 1(0:0) time more. 98(103:109) sts. **Next row (RS)** Cast on 6 sts, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to end. **Next row** Cast on 10 sts, k1, p1, k to last 5 sts, k2tog, k1, p1, k1. 113(118:124) sts. Place a marker at beg of last row. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k to last 5 sts, k2tog, k1, p1, k1.



Rep the last 4 rows 7(8:10) times more. 105(109:113) sts. Cont without further shaping for a few rows until piece measures 19(20:21)cm from **, ending with a WS row. Place a marker at end of last row and leave sts on needle.

BACK

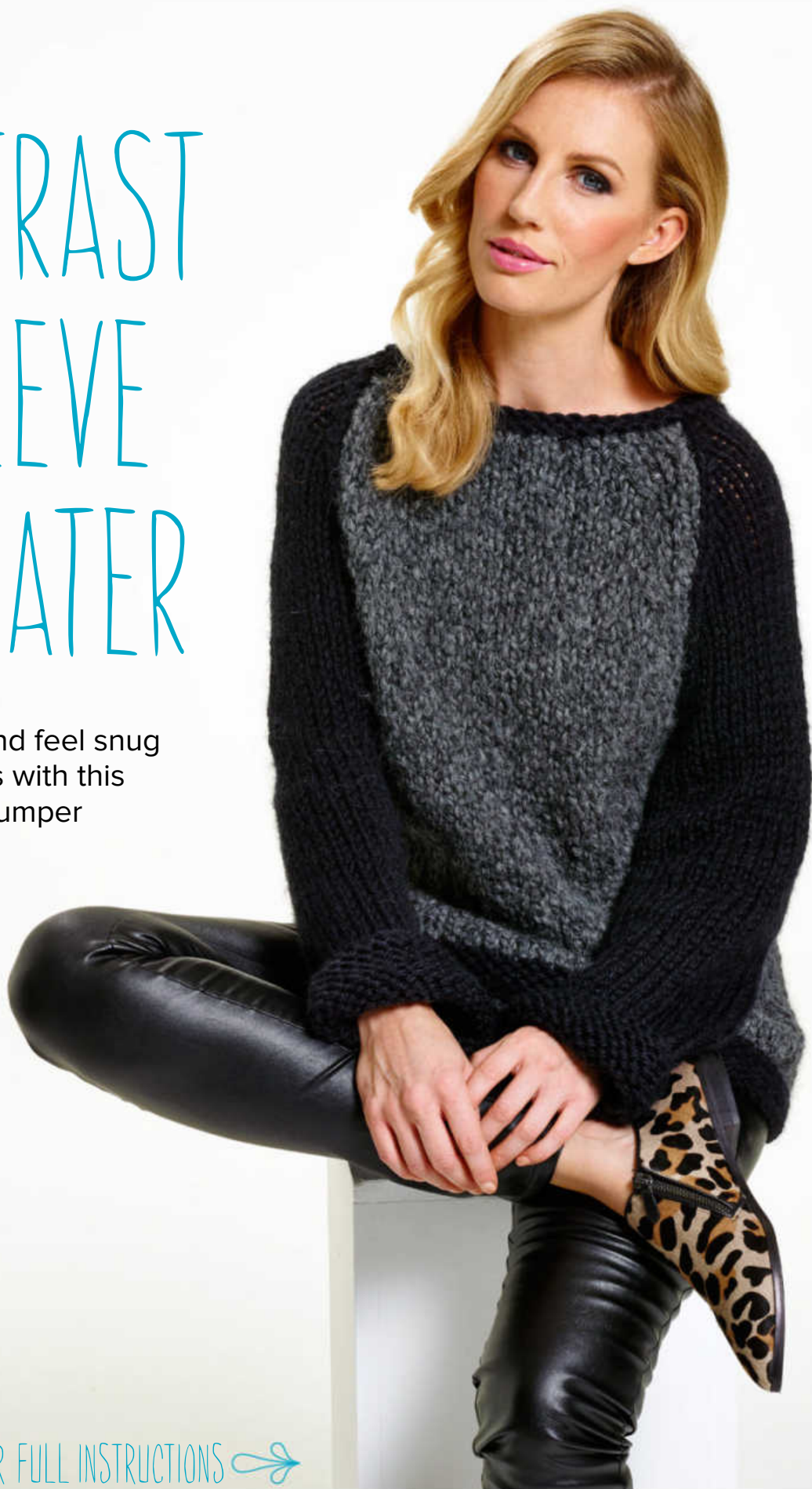
With RS of Left Front facing and 3.75mm circular needle, k1, p1, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1, turn and cast on 41(43:45) sts for back neck, turn and work across Right Front sts on holder as follows: k1, p1, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1. 251(261:271) sts. Work backwards and forwards in rows, cont as follows: **1st row (WS)** K1, p1, k1, p99(103:107), k1, [p1, k1] 23(24:25) times, p99(103:107), k1, p1, k1. **2nd row** K1, p1, k101(105:109), p1, [k1, p1] 22(23:24) times, k101(105:109), p1, k1. Rep the last 2 rows once more. **Next row** K1, p1, k1, p to last 3 sts, k1, p1, k1. **Next row** K1, p1, k to last 2 sts, p1, k1. Rep these 2 rows until back measures same as Left front between markers, ending with a WS row. Cast off 10 sts at beg of next 2 rows and 6 sts at beg of foll 20 rows. 111(121:131) sts. Cont straight in st-st until side edge of Back matches side edge of st-st section of Fronts, ending with a p row. **Moss st row** K1, [p1, k1] to end. Rep this row 3 times more. Cast off in moss st.

TO MAKE UP

Block the piece and lightly steam and press the edges to minimise curling. Join underarm and side seams. Using an iron is not recommended by the yarn manufacturers so be very careful when steaming and pressing and do not press too hard or for too long.

CONTRAST SLEEVE SWEATER

Look good and feel snug
on chilly days with this
easy-to-knit jumper



TURN THE PAGE FOR FULL INSTRUCTIONS ➔

Get making!

CONTRAST-SLEEVE SWEATER

This snugly knit has a lovely contrast sleeve.

Not too tricky!



MEASUREMENTS

To fit bust 81(86:92:97:102:107:112)cm. Finished measurements: Bust 90(95:100:105:110:115:120)cm; Length to centre back 54(56:56:57:58:60:60)cm; Sleeve length 45cm for all sizes.

MATERIALS

4(5:5:5:6:6:6) 100g balls of Debbie Bliss Lara in Ivan 06 (M) and two 100g balls of Debbie Bliss Roma in Black 02 (C). Pair each of 10mm and 12mm knitting needles. Call 01535 664222 for yarn and booklet stockists.

TENSIONS

8 sts and 12 rows using Lara and to 9 sts and 12 rows using Roma, both to 10cm square over st st using 12mm needles.

ABBREVIATIONS

beg beginning; **cm** centimetres; **cont** continue; **inc** increase; **k** knit; **m1** make one st by picking up and working into back of loop lying between st just worked and next st; **p** purl; **rep** repeat; **RS** right side; **skpo** slip 1, **k1**, pass slipped st over; **st(s)** stitch(es); **st-st** stocking stitch; **tog** together.

BACK

With 10mm needles and C, cast on 38(40:42:44:46:48:50) sts. K 7 rows. Change to 12mm needles and M. Beg with a k row, work in st-st until back measures 34(34:34:34:35:35:35)cm from cast on edge, ending with a p row.

Shape raglans

Cast off 4 sts at beg of next 2 rows. 30(32:34:36:38:40:42) sts **. **1st row** K1, skpo, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. **2nd row** P to end. **3rd row** K to end. **4th row** P to end. Rep the last 4 rows 4(4:4:4:3:4:3) times more. 20(22:24:26:30:30:34) sts. **Next row** K1, skpo, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. **Next row** P to end. Rep the last 2 rows 0(1:2:4:3:5) times more.

18(18:20:20:20:22:22) sts. Leave these sts on a spare needle.

FRONT

Work exactly as for Back to **. **1st row** K3, skpo, k to last 5 sts, k2tog, k3. **2nd row** P to end. **3rd row** K to end. **4th row** P to end. Rep the last 4 rows 4(4:4:4:3:4:3) times more. 20(22:24:26:30:30:34) sts. **Next row** K3, skpo, k to last 5 sts, k2tog, k3. **Next row** P to end. Rep the last 2 rows 0(1:2:4:3:5) times more. 18(18:20:20:20:22:22) sts. Leave these sts on a spare needle.

SLEEVES

With 10mm needles and C, cast on 28(29:30:31:32:33:34) sts. K 7 rows. Change to 12mm needles. Beg with a k row, work in st-st. Work 2 rows. **1st inc row** K3, m1, k to end. Work 5 rows in st-st. **2nd inc row** K to last 3 sts, m1, k3. Work 5 rows in st-st. Rep the last 12 rows twice more. 34(35:36:37:38:39:40) sts. Cont straight until sleeve measures 45cm from cast on edge, ending with a p row. **Shape raglan top** Cast off 4 sts at beg of next 2 rows.

26(27:28:29:30:31:32) sts. **1st row** K1, skpo, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. **2nd row** P to end. **3rd row** K to end. **4th row** P to end. Rep the last 4 rows 1(2:2:3:3:4:4) times more. 22(21:22:21:22:21:22) sts. **Next row** K1, skpo, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1. **Next row** P to end. Rep the last 2 rows 6(5:5:4:4:3:3) times more. 8(9:10:11:12:13:14) sts. Leave these sts on a spare needle.

NECKBAND

With RS facing, 10mm needles and C, k first 7(8:9:10:11:12:13) sts from left sleeve, k last st tog with first st on front holder, k16(16:18:18:18:20:20) sts, k last st on front tog with first st on right sleeve, k6(7:8:9:10:11:12) sts, k last st tog with first st on back, k rem 17(17:19:19:19:21:21). 49(51:57:59:61:67:69) sts. K 2 rows. Cast off knitwise on WS.

TO MAKE UP

Join both front raglans and right back raglan seam. Join neckband and left back raglan seam. Join side and sleeve seams.



NEW YEAR KNITS

Whether you're a beginner or an experienced knitter, *Stitch & Story* has something you'll love. Its kits are stylish, beautifully packaged and suitable for any skill level. I really like the Easy Slumber Socks kit (above), from £28, and the Masley Cushion Cover kit (below), from £34. Happy knitting!



Party style

◆ Entertaining this holiday season? If you want something fun and a little different to decorate the house, these giant paper concertina baubles make a great alternative to balloons. They'll last longer, too.

• *Baubles*, from £9.50 each, *Talking Tables*

◆ For a sparkly centrepiece, transform fresh pears with gold and silver glitter spray paint, leave to dry and then push sparklers into the flesh! Light, stand back and enjoy the glow.

• *Sparklers*, from £2.50, *Talking Tables*



Sew it, make it, love it!

ON SALE NOW!

The latest *Prima Christmas Makes*, £4.99, is on sale in newsagents and supermarkets. It's packed with ideas that will inspire you to make gorgeous gifts for your friends and family. Plus, there's a fabulous free festive finger puppet project, too.



Sweet wrappers

Haven't done your wrapping yet? Make your gifts look extra special with beautiful ribbons and papers.



◆ These glittery pom-pom clusters from Cox & Cox (£5.50 for 72 pom-poms) come in bunches of 12 and are all individually wired for easy use on your gifts. Combine with ribbon and gift tags for really cute gift wrapping.

◆ This copper wrapping paper from Cox & Cox (£12.50 for 10m) is so stylish and has a purple lining, too. I will be using it with the stunning grey satin ribbon (£9.50 for 20m), which has Merry Christmas printed in copper. Why not add photos for a personal touch?



◆ I love this blackboard paper kit – you get two sheets of paper, twine and a chalk pen (£7.50, *Talking Tables*). Draw on your own gift tags or let the little 'uns write their own messages.



• Your time off & time out

THIS MONTH'S BEST TV, FILMS, LIVE SHOWS AND MORE

An evening out at the movies



'Brangelina' are back!
Brad Pitt and Angelina
Jolie star in *By the Sea*

BY THE SEA

It's been a decade since Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt fell in love on the set of crime caper *Mr & Mrs Smith*. They're on screen together again, here as a couple whose marriage seems doomed during a holiday in a French villa. And this time around, Angelina did the writing and directing herself.

Out 11 December

JOY

This real life story about Joy Mangano, a hard-up single mum of three who founded her own business empire, is an inspirational tale. Jennifer Lawrence, who plays Joy, is reunited with *Silver Linings Playbook*'s director David O Russell and co-star Bradley Cooper. Here, Cooper portrays the businessman who championed Joy when she invented the Miracle Mop – the product that launched her multi-million dollar company. Robert De Niro also stars as Joy's dad. **Out 1 January**

THE DANISH GIRL

Eddie Redmayne, who won an Oscar for *The Theory of Everything*, could earn another statuette for his role in this film. Directed by Tom Hooper (*The King's Speech*), it tells the story of Danish painter Einar Wegener, who became Lili Elbe in a pioneering gender reassignment operation in the 1930s. The film is about the love he received from his wife Gerda (Alicia Vikander), and is testament to the trials faced by anyone who feels they are inhabiting the wrong body. **Out 1 January**

IN THE HEART OF THE SEA

The story of a crew battling to stay alive in the ocean after an attack from a mammoth whale is said to have inspired the classic 19th-century novel *Moby Dick*. With 21st century special effects (and the addition of Chris Hemsworth) that tale becomes totally compelling. Hemsworth last worked with director Ron Howard in Formula One drama *Rush*. And, thankfully, like that film, this one is not just for the boys. **Out 26 December**

Don't miss out!



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

It wouldn't be Christmas without Scrooge, Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit. And this updated West End version of the classic Dickens tale promises to be a real cracker. Oscar-winner

Jim Broadbent (above) stars as 'Mr Bah Humbug' himself, alongside a stellar cast. *Until 30 January; noelcowardtheatre.co.uk*



NUTCRACKER: THE ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET

This iconic company of dancers will soon be pirouetting on to the London Coliseum stage to perform the world-famous ballet. Last year's *Nutcracker*

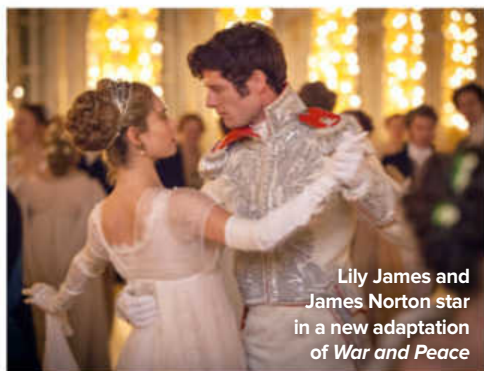
played to a total of 70,000 fans. While this is a different version, Tchaikovsky's score, of course, remains the same. *Until 10 January; eno.org*



STRICTLY COME DANCING LIVE TOUR

No need to suffer from *Strictly Come Dancing* withdrawal, as the show is back on tour! Expect sequins, live music and some of the popular celebrities from the 2015 show strutting their stuff.

Not forgetting the judges, of course, including Craig Revel Horwood (above). *22 January to 14 February; strictlycomedancinglive.com*



Lily James and James Norton star in a new adaptation of *War and Peace*

What's on TV

WAR AND PEACE BBC ONE

Never read Tolstoy's classic doorstep novel? No worries. In a new six-episode adaptation, there's a riot of corsets, snowy landscapes and simmering passions, as the story of the entwined lives of five Russian aristocratic families during the Napoleonic Wars unfolds. The cast includes Lily James and James Norton.

DICKENSIAN

BBC ONE

Don't miss this 20-episode mash-up of Charles Dickens's work, which features our brilliant columnist



Richard Ridings and Caroline Quentin play Mr and Mrs Bumble

Caroline Quentin as Mrs Bumble. We're sure Dickens himself would have approved of the way in which his best-loved characters have been thrown together in this new murder mystery. The series kicks off on Boxing Day.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC LIVE ITV

Enjoy this live broadcast of Rodgers and Hammerstein's most famous musical on 20 December. Former *EastEnders* actress and *Strictly* winner Kara Tointon is Maria, and her co-star is the dashing Julian Ovenden. Look out for *Bake Off's* Mel Giedroyc, too – her sister Coky happens to be the show's director.

BEOWULF ITV

ITV's 13-part reimagining of one of literature's most epic adventures is packed with bloody battles, thrilling horseback chases, love scenes and even a CGI monster or two. Prepare to be in awe, not just of Kieran Bew (right), but also the sheer scale of the sets built in a disused quarry. Drama doesn't get bigger or better than this.



GHOST HUNTING WITH

Rafe Spall

Rafe Spall, 32, has a big year ahead. He's the lead in ITV's spooky new drama *Harry Price: Ghost Hunter* and his wife, former *Hollyoaks* star Elize du Toit, is expecting their third child. The family live in North London.



Harry Price was a real ghost hunter.

What can you tell us about him?

I'd never heard of him before I got the role and then, when I did my research, I discovered that in the 1920s – when spiritualism was a big deal in this country – he was as famous as some of the modern clairvoyants we know today. He was an early Doris Stokes or Colin Fry.

Could he contact the spirit world?

No, not at all. He started out as a scientific researcher of psychic phenomena, but he got tired of shattering people's illusions with the truth. So, for a while, he became a charlatan, giving people false hope.

Did playing him convince you of the existence of ghosts and ghouls?

Absolutely not. I'm like the Harry of our story, who knows that they don't exist and who, in this case, sets out to prove that there's a reasonable, scientific explanation for why the wife of a Liberal MP is seeing ghosts. And, if you ask me, there's always an explanation for these things.

You have lots of roles coming up; last year must have been busy?

Yes! I've been in New Orleans filming *The Big Short* starring Brad Pitt, the Lake District for the film *Swallows and Amazons*, Somerset for a film based on the book *Mum's List*, and Vancouver, twice – with Steven Spielberg for *The BFG*

and also for a pilot of a new US comedy series *Roadies*. I feel tired thinking about it and very grateful to my wife, who's done the lion's share of childcare – the hardest job in the world.

Do you take the family with you?

Yes, when I can. We're currently thinking about what will happen next year, when we'll have three children, all aged under five, and I'm due to film the series of *Roadies* in Los Angeles. Lena, four, has just started school, and Rex, three, starts soon, too. You can't just turn their world upside down. On the other hand, while I'm not complaining about all the employment, it can feel desperate being away from them.

Your parents – Shane and Timothy – have had a long, happy marriage. Have they inspired you?

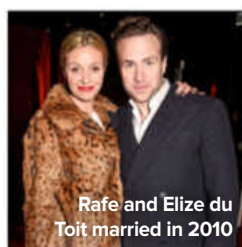
Most definitely, and Elize's parents have been together even longer than mine. It's made us both the type who mate for life. Our parents' marriages are definitely what we aspire to.

Was it tough following your dad into the acting business?

At first, there was definitely a sense of needing to prove myself as an actor because someone like my dad, who's a bona fide National Treasure, casts a glorious shadow. But, hopefully, I'm now employed for my own talents. Growing up with him was the best background, for being a man and an actor. I learned lots of important things – never to get too grand and always be kind.

Have you ever experienced anything spooky?

Weirdly, when I started researching Harry Price, I discovered that he'd been to my old school and, when I looked, there he was right next to me on the list of alumni! That's pretty spooky, isn't it?



Rafe and Elize du Toit married in 2010



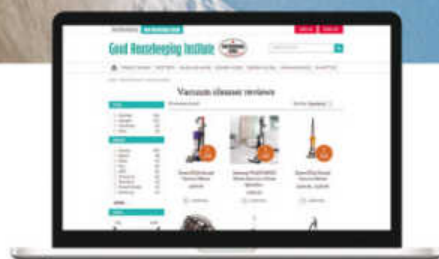
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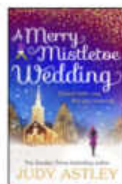
Curl up with a good book



Books editor Cathy Rentzenbrink has picked the best books to tuck into over the festive holidays



4 stories for Christmas Day



A MERRY MISTLETOE WEDDING
by Judy Astley (Black Swan, £6.99)

Thea and Sean don't want any fuss for their Christmas wedding. However, as the big day gets nearer, there are some complications. Will they actually make it up the aisle? **Out now**



THE CHOCOLATE LOVERS' CHRISTMAS
by Carole Matthews

(Sphere, £7.99) Lucy loves running Chocolate Heaven, but hasn't seen her boyfriend in weeks. Then, out of the blue, her ex-fiancé turns up. Will it be a merry Christmas? **Out now**



THE CHRISTMAS SURPRISE
by Jenny Colgan (Sphere, £7.99)

Newly engaged Rosie Hopkins is looking forward to Christmas in her little sweet shop, but then fate strikes a terrible blow. Includes some delicious festive recipes. **Out now**



THE CHRISTMAS CAFÉ
by Amanda Prowse (Head of Zeus, £7.99)

When her husband of 30 years dies, Bea throws herself into work in Sydney. Then she gets an email that sends her across the world to Edinburgh, where an old mystery awaits... **Out now**

MY 5 ALL-TIME FAVOURITES



LITTLE WOMEN
by Louisa May Alcott (Vintage Classics, £5.99)

Four sisters – Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy – celebrate Christmas by trying to think of others. A beautiful, heartwarming read.



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
by Jane Austen (Vintage Classics, £5.25)

Will Mrs Bennet see her five daughters get married? When a rich young man moves into Netherfield, her hopes are raised.



THE PURSUIT OF LOVE
by Nancy Mitford (Penguin, £8.99)

Linda's desire to be in love leads her to run away from a boring marriage. Then she meets Fabrice and a new chapter opens...



THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE
by Audrey Niffenegger (Vintage, £8.99)

Henry's genetic disorder causes him to time travel, taking him away from his wife. A moving love story.



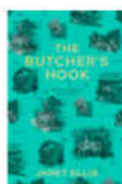
I CAPTURE THE CASTLE
by Dodie Smith (Vintage Children's Classics, £7.99) Cassandra Mortmain writes a diary about how her eccentric and poor family responds to the arrival of rich Americans next door.

3 to pre-order for next year



THE WIDOW
by Fiona Barton (Bantam Press, £12.99)

Jean Taylor stood by her husband when he was accused of a terrible crime. Now he's dead and she's talking to the press. Will the truth come out? **Out 14 Jan**



THE BUTCHER'S HOOK
by Janet Ellis (Two Roads, £14.99)

In London in 1763, Anne Jaccob, 19, falls in love with a butcher's apprentice. Unfortunately, her well-to-do family have other ideas for her future. **Out 25 Feb**



NOT WORKING
by Lisa Owens (Picador, £12.99)

Claire Flannery quits her job to work out what she wants to do with her life, but then isn't so sure. Funny but sad take on the pressures of modern life. **Out 21 Apr**



Join Prima's online book club!

Calling all bookworms! You could be one of 75 lucky readers to review a book each month and share your thoughts. Sign up today and you'll find plenty of new novels to inspire you, including *The Lake House* by Kate Morton, as well as a 40% discount on all Pan Macmillan books. Go to: prima.co.uk/bookclub



Winter wonderland

Whether you're an ace on the ski slopes or more into a hot chocolate and sleigh ride, we've found a sublime snowy escape for you

Have an ice time in Bavaria

Bavaria in south-eastern Germany is well known for its fairy-tale castles but less so for its winter activities. That might be about to change with Crystal Ski's new holidays to the snowy meadows and scenic mountains, offering everything from cross-country skiing to driving piste bashers.

Novices can ski on the local mountain for free and the Ruhpolding eXtra Card (free when you stay in a Crystal Ski hotel) is good value for money as you get two hours per day free ski lift usage at Unternberg. It also entitles you to free access to the local ice rink and museums, Nordic walking tours, bus and train travel and a children's activity programme.

SNOWY BOOKING: Crystal Ski Holidays offers a week's stay at the four-star Alpenhotel Wittelsbach in Ruhpolding from £485 per person, including flights. Call 020 8939 0726 or visit crystalski.co.uk.



LEFT: A cosy room at Alpenhotel Wittelsbach
BELOW: Take a walk through the snowy Bavarian forests



Escape from it all in Finnish Lapland

Situated in **Syöte National Park**, around **150km below the Arctic Circle**, the recently renovated Iso-Syöte hotel offers authentic Lapland breaks with a variety of cool activities on its doorstep. There's a choice of traditional private cabins with wooden interiors and roaring log fires, all situated on the fells found along the southern border of Finnish Lapland. Enjoy panoramic views of lakes, forests and wilderness areas in every direction. Nearby, you can go skiing, snowmobiling, husky sledging and ice fishing, plus the hotel offers an on-site spa with outdoor hot tubs overlooking the valley for you to warm up afterwards.

SNOWY BOOKING: A three-night break in a Kelo Cottage costs from £631 per person for half-board, based on two sharing, including flights. Call 01737 900 605 or visit discover-the-world.co.uk.

Stay in a log cabin and soak up the scenic snowy vistas



Get yourself to Les Gets

The French ski resort of **Les Gets** is extremely popular, as there are a variety of slopes for all levels of skiers.

But the resort has much more to offer than just skiing, including dog sledging, snowshoeing, ice skating, paragliding, hot-air ballooning and relaxing spas.

It's also a great resort for those with little ones, as the kids' ski area offers everything from drawing competitions to treasure hunts. Plus, it has an American-Indian theme, so there are also real teepees to play in.

SNOWY BOOKING: A fully catered holiday in Les Chats Bleus chalet (sleeps 13 and has en-suite family rooms, a hot tub on the terrace and a children's playroom) starts from £719 per person per week, including flights from Gatwick to Geneva, and transfers, with Chalet Finder. Call 0161 408 0441 or visit chaletfinder.co.uk. ➔



Brave the cold by taking a dip in the chalet's hot tub (above) and then warm up by the fire inside

Snowy thrills in La Plagne

La Plagne in the French Alps has a host of activities that will keep even non-skiers entertained. For those with nerves of steel, it's home to the 1992 Winter Olympics bobsleigh track. Speed down the course in a Bob raft with three friends and reach up to 80kph, or take the single-seater Mono-Bob, which accelerates up to 90kph. There's also an ultimate Olympic Experience, so you can see what it's like to reach speeds of over 100kph! Bobsleigh from £33 per person; bobsleigh.net.

Alternatively, you can swap your skis for a fat bike (which has thick, under-inflated tyres that are designed to grip the snow) in the nearby village of Montchavin (from £21 per person; visit montchavin-lescoches.com).



Here, you can board the gondola to the top of the Plan Bois plateau and speed down the groomed tree-lined runs.

SNOWY BOOKING: Powder White has apartments in La Plagne starting from £69 per person for seven nights based on seven people sharing. Call 0845 463 6227 or visit powderwhite.com.



WELLBEING ON ICE

Does a combo of snow and yoga sound like your dream holiday?

Then Val Thorens is the place for you, with snowshoeing sessions combined with pranayama yoga.

SNOWY BOOKING: Ski Collection offers seven nights in self-catered accommodation from £731, which includes half-day snowshoe yoga and Eurotunnel crossing. Call 0844 576 0175 or visit skicollection.co.uk.

All aboard the Polar Express

Norway's Polar Express Adventure with Inghams includes a fantastic range of escorted excursions. These include seeing the Northern Lights, husky sledding, a visit to the Polar Park Arctic Wildlife Centre (where you'll be able to see Arctic foxes, wolves and reindeer), a visit to the Narvik centre to learn about Norway's military history and enjoy a traditional Sami dinner, and, of course, a ride on the Polar Express scenic train (below).

For a range of activities on the ice, try Inntravel's new break in Norway's

remote Highlands at Hindsaeter, which offers cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, a wild elk safari and a wilderness experience along the frozen River Sjoa's canyon.

SNOWY BOOKING: A three-night half-board Northern Norway Polar Express Adventure costs from £799 per person, with flights and trips. Call 01483 791116 or visit ingham.co.uk.

A six-night full board trip to the Hindsaeter Highlands with activities, flights and transfers costs from £1,135 per person with Inntravel. Call 01653 617000 or visit inntravel.co.uk.



All aboard! The Polar Express takes you on a journey across the Swedish border



The real reason mums go to Iceland...

Reykjavik provides a perfect base for exploring Iceland's snow-covered landscape during the winter months, with some of the country's most breathtaking scenery just a short drive away. Regent Holidays has an array of Iceland adventures that

are ideal for getting in amongst the white stuff and include snowmobile safaris, superjeep tours of the Golden Circle and hikes up snow-capped glaciers. These range in price, from £59 to £209 per person, and combine perfectly with a Reykjavik city break.

SNOWY BOOKING: Regent Holidays offers three nights at the four-star Centerhotel Arnarhvoll in central Reykjavik from £530 per person with breakfast, including return flights and transfers. Call 020 7666 1290 or visit regent-holidays.co.uk.



FEEL LIKE BOND

For a taste of 007 glamour, head to the ski resort of Sölden in the Ötztal valley of Tirol, Austria, where scenes from the new James Bond film *Spectre* were shot. There's a mountain lift station that looks like curved steel ribs and a restaurant called Ice Q in the shape of a giant ice cube. For more information, visit soelden.com.

Where the wild things are

Frozen lakes, deep snow, wildlife tracks, the howl of a wolf and the crisp, clear air are just a few of the delights of a Canadian winter experience in Algonquin Park, Ontario. The excitement of mushing your own team of huskies or cross-country skiing through the wilderness are sure to make you feel closer to nature.

SNOWY BOOKING: Windows on the Wild offers three nights in Toronto and two nights at the Algonquin Log Cabin, with dog sledding, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing from £995 per person, including all meals, flights and transfers. Call 020 8742 1556 or visit windowsonthewild.com.



LEFT:
Go dog sledding through the snow
BELOW:
Algonquin Park is beautiful at twilight



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You said it!

The Prima chat room

What you're doing, sharing and talking about this month

'ME TIME' MAGIC

A survey has revealed that in the run-up to the festive season, we only take 3% of our day for me time*. But, during this stressful time of year, it's more important than ever to take time out. We asked you to vote for your fave ways to relax. And breathe...

f FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

Suzanne Prowse
A little me time is just sitting watching a film with my daughter...

Jenny Helliker
Walking the dog on the local heath. Perfect on any day!

Julia Spurrett Immersing myself in a good book!



'WE ♥ PRIMA FASHION!'



Since its launch, the stunning new Elvi Prima premium collection, designed by our fab fashion editor Amanda, has sent you all aflutter on Twitter...

@marcy718 This skirt from @ELVIClothing is everything! #plussizefashion

@Xlaslife The Prima collection at @ELVIClothing is AH-MAY-ZING

@LalaaMisaki Totally in love with my jumpsuit by @ELVIClothing

@NerdAboutTown So... there is an @ELVIClothing ombre sequin dress that I've just seen. I died a bit



• Want to know what all the fuss is about? Find out more and shop the fabulous new Elvi Prima premium collection now at elvi.co.uk

WHAT'S IN THE PRIMA INBOX?

Sew inspiring!

As a regular reader, I have amassed a shelf-ful of your sewing patterns.

For winter, I wanted a simple pattern for a wrap coat and was delighted to find one in your February 2013 issue.

I made it in just an afternoon and was thrilled with the results (left). Your patterns are really easy to follow – so more of the same please!

Alison Webb via email

A helpful read

I'm an avid Prima reader – I bought my first issue in 1986 – and, over the years, I've tried the recipes, make-up, fashion and decoration tips, and the Christmas menus. Prima also helped me with life's struggles, from separations to dealing with difficult teens. Thank you for the inspiration, wonderful reads and advice.

Marian Ellul via email



Take care of you

Last year, I carried out my promises to drive, visit and help family despite having an awful stomach ache, and ended up with a burst appendix. So the feature *Are you just too nice?* (Nov 2015) was really helpful. I learned that if you don't look after yourself, you won't be able to care for others.

Dianne Boardman via email



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Just for you...

8 PAGES OF GIVEAWAYS, PUZZLES, OFFERS AND A FAB SHORT STORY!

Easy to win New Year treats!

Enter by
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Pampering spa breaks

We've teamed up with the Alton Towers Spa to offer two lucky readers (and three of their friends) a relaxing break, each worth £500! The winners will receive an overnight stay at one of the themed hotels, including an evening meal and breakfast, plus a half-day pamper package at the spa. Boasting a pool, crystal steam room, meditation room and Roman sauna, the spa's Aqua Relaxation Rooms also offer a range of treatments, such as massages and manicures. For more information, visit altontowers.com/spa. **Call 0905 817 2740 (80ppm)*. Text PRIMAWIN1 to 87088 (£1.50)**.** Write to Prima/Alton Towers GVPRAL15694. For full T&Cs, see p160



Nail treats

Say hello to a shiny, strong, long-lasting manicure with this talon-tastic prize! Three lucky readers will be able to bring the nail salon to their home with a new range of at-home nail gel kits from Belle Gel Rapide. This super-handly kit is so small you can pop it in your handbag. The prize includes an iPhone-sized lamp, base and top coat, plus 11 coloured gels and an array of accessories, together worth over £250! The gel is easy to apply and dries instantly, so no smudging, and the colours stay on the nails for two weeks. For more information, visit bellegelrapide.co.uk. **Call 0905 817 2742 (80ppm)*. Text PRIMAWIN3 to 87088 (£1.50)**.** Write to Prima/Belle Gel Rapide GVPRAL15696.



Better shape up!

Want to look fabulous in your party dress or shape up in the New Year? Then, listen up – énergie Fitness Clubs, énergie Fitness for Women and Fit4less are offering 10 lucky readers the chance to win the incredible émpower fitness programme worth £100. The four-week results-guaranteed programme is available at any of the 100 modern énergie clubs in the UK, so there's sure to be one near you. The programme includes



personal training sessions, a welcome pack, fitness and diet plans and full access to the fitness club. For more information, visit energiegroup.com.

Call 0905 817 2743 (80ppm)*. Text PRIMAWIN4 to 87088 (£1.50).** Write to Prima/Energie Fitness GVPRAL15697. For full T&Cs, see p160

Tickets to Crufts

The world's largest dog show is back from 10 to 13 March 2016 at The NEC Birmingham. To celebrate, we have 30 pairs of tickets up for grabs – each pair is worth £36. Over 26,000 dogs visit Crufts every year and there are over 400 stands with special treats for them and their owners. And, if you're thinking about purchasing the perfect pooch, the Discover Dogs area is the place to be – here you'll find over 200 pedigree dogs and their owners, so you can gain first-hand advice to help you find a winning companion! For more information, visit crufts.org.uk. **Call 0905 817 2741 (80ppm)*. Text PRIMAWIN2 to 87088 (£1.50)**.** Write to Prima/Crufts GVPRAL15695.





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£100

READER SHORT STORY

The walk

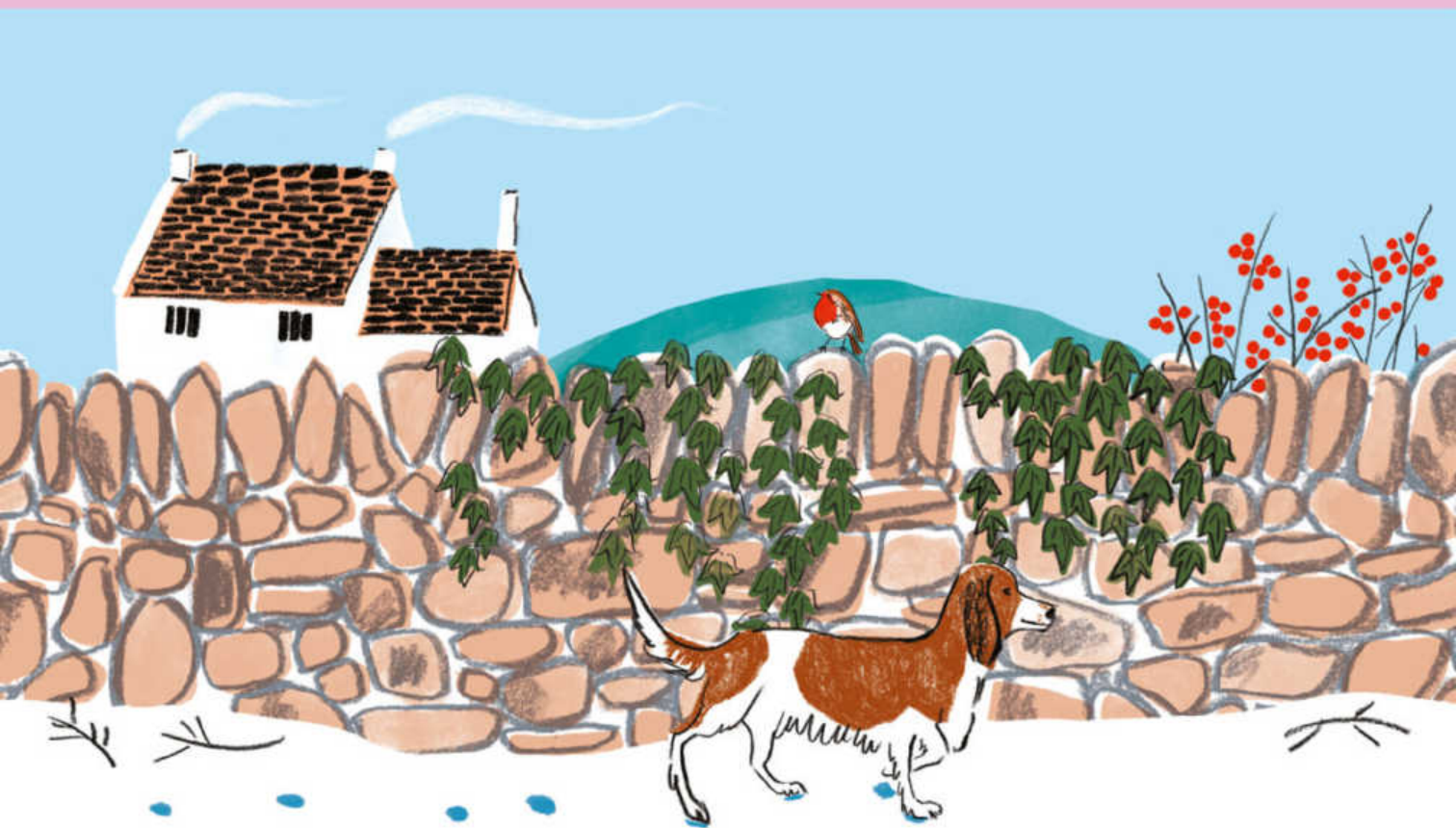
A stroll on a snowy winter's day can take you on a trip down memory lane

Sarah sunk her feet into her pair of well-worn boots. Sitting on the bottom step of the hallway stairs, her fingers carried out the well-practised routine of threading laces through the eyes before passing them around the hooks and tying a neat bow. Monty, her playful spaniel, nudged her arm in eagerness. The wind was howling outside the cottage, but the Yorkshire sky was blue. Sarah's hand hovered for a few moments before lifting the warm but non-waterproof coat from the brass hook on the wall. She zipped up the jacket, opened the heavy wooden door and braced herself for the elements.

Walking along the lane, through the snow, Sarah buried her chin into her warm scarf that was knitted by her granddaughter Holly, Christmas just gone. Holly, at 11 years old, had been so pleased with her creation, jumping with excitement for Sarah to open it before she

could even pass her own gifts out to her only grandchild. The rainbow of colours, the softness of the yarn and the sweet wooden buttons sewed on askew meant it was cherished with even more love and fondness for this little girl, so shy and unsure and yet so strong and definite. Monty ran on ahead, the stone walls and bare trees of winter that flanked the lane unnoticed by him, as bouncy and enthusiastic as if it were spring.

Spring, sighed Sarah, as she remembered with fondness walking this same track as a young child with her mother alongside. Red campion, primroses; an aroma of life filling the air. Back then, Sarah had skipped barefoot and now, as she snuggled further into her scarf, she smiled at the memory of soft grass between her small delicate toes. They would take their first picnic of the year further up into the hills, eating their hard-boiled eggs in silence, all the while looking out across the dales with



a contentedness that felt smooth and slippery as it glided down from soft smiles and inwards toward warm hearts.

It had been the summer of Sarah's twelfth year when a chink appeared on this sweet unencumbered childhood. Her father didn't want to be a farmer any more, her mother had said. 'Now it's just you and me, love.' Sarah had felt confused, but in those days there was no discussion of affairs or growing apart, not like now. So on they went, mother and daughter, tending to the sheep and working quietly alongside each other, united by their love for this landscape.

And what a sweet life it had been here in the hills. A life of wild flowers and hay bales, evening light and laughter. Autumn became Sarah's favourite season, for it was October when her beautiful daughter Laura had

been born. A child so sweet with the warmest of auburn hair, a child so wanted, so cherished and born of nothing but love between Sarah and her beloved Michael. Michael, thought Sarah fondly, as she picked up a damp, gnarled stick to throw for Monty. Michael had brought such joy to her life and she missed him every day.

This winter would be the third without him and, though she still longed for him with a deep ache, it was the landscape that drove her on. For 63 years, this had been her home; this white rendered farmhouse on a remote dale and her spirit was at the centre of it all, in tune with each season: watching, learning, loving, losing, remembering, laughing, yearning. She was a well-worn woman in well-worn boots, walking a well-worn path that knew her so well and, for that, she was glad.



DO YOU HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS?

MEET THE AUTHOR: This month's winning author is **Alice Griffin from Yiewsley, Middlesex**, who wins £100! She says: 'Although I've been writing for a long time, I've only been sending my short stories

out into the world for a little while. It was such a wonderful boost to hear that my story had been picked. I was so thrilled, I immediately baked a cake to celebrate the news!' For your chance to win, email your entry of 800 words maximum to yourwinningstory@hearst.co.uk

or post to Your Winning Story, Prima Features, 72 Broadwick Street, London W1F 9EP, including your name, address, phone number and a good quality photograph. Please note that, unfortunately, Prima cannot return any photographs or stories.

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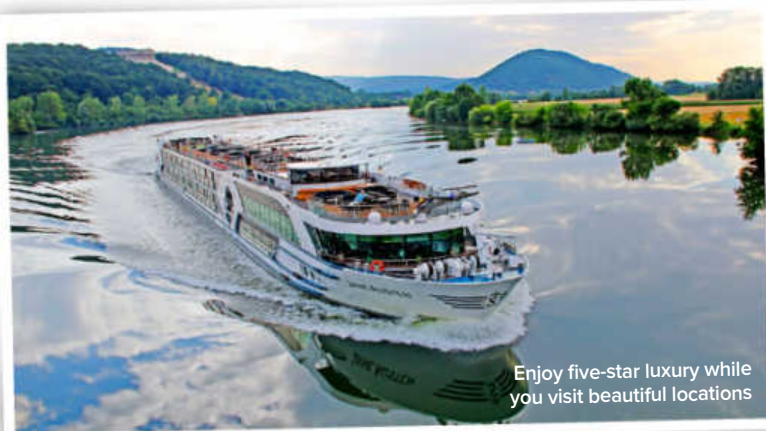
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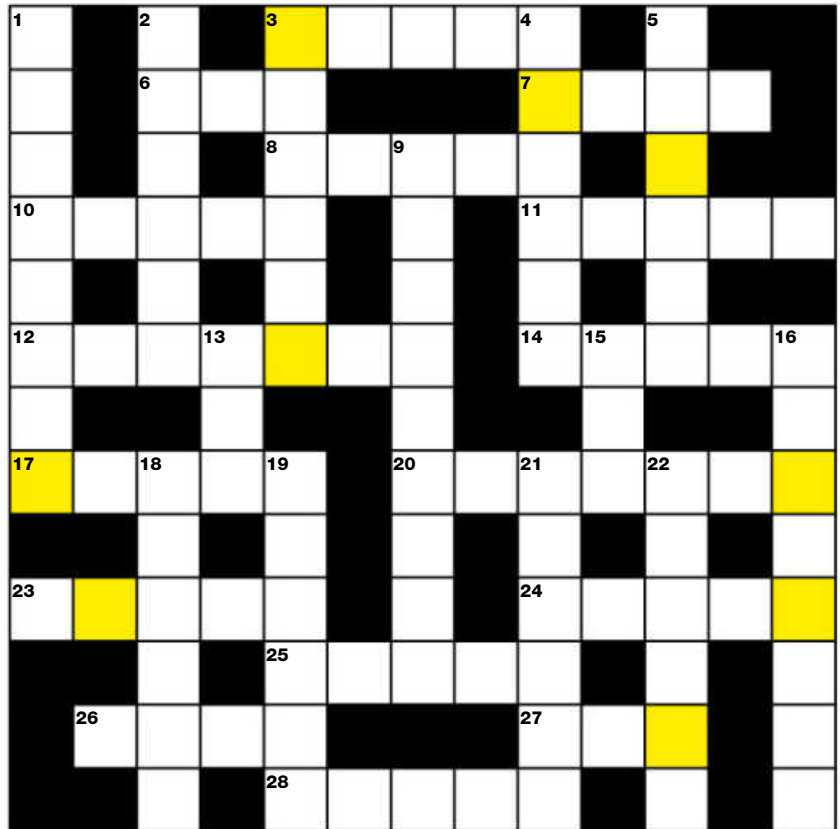
ACROSS

- 3 Will wonders never ____, expression (5)
- 6 ____ Wednesday, first day of Lent (3)
- 7 Employed, utilised (4)
- 8 Bring on yourself (5)
- 10 Dense ring-shaped bread roll (5)
- 11 ____-3, fatty acid found chiefly in fish oils (5)
- 12 Poet who wrote *The Waste Land* (11,5)
- 14 Country where the popular tourist resort of Sharm el-Sheikh is located (5)
- 17 Of or relating to sheep (5)
- 20 Subtle differences, fine distinctions (7)
- 23 But now I'm older and ____, saying (5)
- 24 Measure of gold (5)
- 25 Bruce ____, Batman's alter ego (5)
- 26 Expanding supermarket chain that won *Which?* Best Supermarket 2015 (4)
- 27 ____ as you earn, tax deduction system (3)
- 28 Abnormally tall person, animal or plant (5)

DOWN

- 1 Tabletop football game where players flick miniature figures at a ball in order to score goals (8)
- 2 Rigid ornamental band worn around the wrist (6)
- 3 Bird's-eye or Scotch bonnet pepper, eg (6)
- 4 Continent (6)
- 5 & 22D New leader of the Labour Party (6,6)
- 9 One-hundredth anniversary of a significant event (9)
- 13 ____ Goodman, *Strictly Come Dancing's* head judge (3)
- 15 Gordon's tippie? (3)
- 16 Thin, cylindrical laboratory glassware item (4,4)
- 18 To add ____ to injury, expression (6)
- 19 Listen in, eavesdrop (6)
- 21 Take receipt of (6)
- 22 See 5D

CROSSWORD



10 ACROSS



13 DOWN



1 DOWN

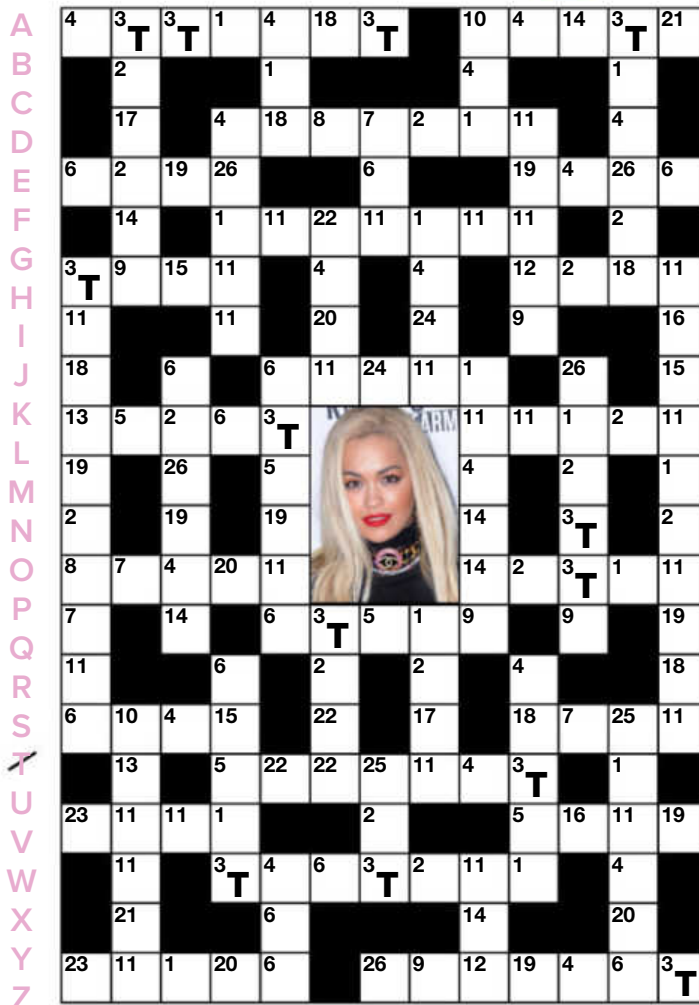
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For £50, see if Rita Ora can help you work out the number code for each letter of the alphabet. We've placed the letter T, now you do the same with the letters R, I and A and on you go. When you're done, use your key grid to find out the prize word. **Call 0901 609 4221*** and leave your name, address and the answer. All calls cost 65p per minute, plus your telephone company's network access charge, and should last no longer than two minutes. You can also write in – see **HOW TO ENTER** (below).



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
R	I	T	A									
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

YOUR KEY GRID:

6	8	7	11	11	21	11

Call with your answer on **0901 609 4221***

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LAST MONTH'S JUST FOR FUN SOLUTIONS

SUDOKU

8	3	7	4	5	1	9	2	6
6	1	9	2	8	7	4	5	3
5	4	2	3	9	6	8	7	1
9	2	3	7	1	4	5	6	8
7	8	5	9	6	2	1	3	4
4	6	1	5	3	8	2	9	7
3	5	6	8	4	9	7	1	2
1	7	8	6	2	5	3	4	9
2	9	4	1	7	3	6	8	5

EASY PEASY

5	2	7	9	1	6	4	3	8
9	8	3	4	5	7	2	6	1
1	4	6	2	3	8	9	7	5
7	9	1	3	8	2	5	4	6
4	5	2	6	7	1	3	8	9
3	6	8	5	9	4	1	2	7
6	7	4	1	2	9	8	5	3
8	1	5	7	4	3	6	9	2
2	3	9	8	6	5	7	1	4

TOUGH STUFF

OCTOBER 2015 PRIZE SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD Coconut

CODEWORD Logical

ARROW-WORD April Eleventh

* Solutions to this month's prize-winning puzzles will be in the April 2016 issue.

WIN
£50

ARROW-WORD

Put your feet up and win
£50 at the same time!

Fill in the grid according to the arrows. When done, the shaded yellow squares will reveal the answer to the following question:
Humans share 50% of their DNA with which fruit? (7)

Small garden scoop	Snake	Unhappy	Reared, raised	Pig's nose	Day before	Greek God of love	Uncommon	Jewel	Small breed of chicken	Mistake	Opposite of fresh
					Creature with a backbone						
Hot ____, Easter treat (5,3)	Average golf score			Anne ____, Henry VIII's second wife	Historical period			Spoil, ruin		Second Greek letter	Fencer's weapon
		First performance				Naturally occurring mineral			Aristocratic		
Wise bird?	The pen is mightier than this!	Speck			Employ, utilise			Meryl ____, US actress			
			America (1,1,1)	Drinking tube				Run riot	__ and __, graces, show of superiority	Flow in a steady stream	Very serious or gloomy
Not fast!	Migraine, eg	Great ____, river of NE England									
								Extreme female fan	US state, capital Columbus	Pablo ____, Cubist artist	Perfect example, embodiment
In need of a drink	Mend a hole (in a sock, eg)										
		__ Oliver, British chef	Prize, trophy	Slip, skid				Small prawn-like shellfish			
Once possessed	Film about a Great White shark				Happen again	Popular Mexican dish	French Impressionist painter	Crack, fissure	Lazy	__ up, adds together	__ up, stop talking abruptly
				Would I ____, You?, panel show (3,2)				Read the ____, criticise harshly (4,3)			
Colourful breed of parrot	A long dress or coat, eg				Open, frank					Capital of Norway	
				Score of 40-40 in tennis				Floating remains (of a ship)			
Church singing group	Lip, rim				Turn, spin				An unspecified amount		

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and WIN
£50

Fill in the answers to the clues and the letters in the seven shaded squares will spell out your prize answer

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Call with your answer
on 0901 609 4222*

1	4	5			6	3		
	7		8	4	5	1		
6	9				7	5	2	4
9	5	1		8				2
8		4	9	3	2	7		5
2				5		4	9	8
5	8	9	1				4	6
		6	4	2	9		5	
		3	5			7	1	

EASY PEASY

	6	9		8			5	1
4					1		8	3
	3		4			9		
							1	
8		3	5					6
		4		1		3		
		2	1	6				5
9					7		2	
	5			2		4		

TOUGH STUFF

SUDOKU

Place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each column and each 3 x 3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9.

Just for
FUN

Published monthly by Hearst Magazines UK,
72 Broadwick Street, London W1F 9EP
Tel: 020 7312 3887 Email: prima@hearst.co.uk

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Your Stars for January



with
Lori Reid



Capricorn

23 December – 20 January

Hit the sales between the 2nd and 4th, but don't go too mad! It's time to turn a corner on the 10th: start a new fitness regime or go for a completely new look. Book a place on a course, too, as 2016 is the year to expand your knowledge and pick up some new skills.

Aquarius

21 January – 19 February

January is a time of preparation and, even though you're not at your most energetic or enthusiastic, destiny is working for you. From the 3rd, it's all go as you gear up for work. Money is a big focus for you in 2016, so save up for that trip of a lifetime.

Pisces

20 February – 20 March

This month, you're giving off all the right vibes. By the 8th, a special someone walks back into your life. The perfect time to join groups and meet new people is after the 10th. Ideal, too, to ask for favours. Eclipses in your sign in March and September make this your year of personal transformation.

Aries

21 March – 20 April

This month, you're determined to make your mark. On the 3rd, Mars moves out of your relationship skies and takes the heat out of some difficult situations. In 2016, it's time to look forward. Open your heart to happier times – to love, partnerships and a new life.



What's
in store
for 2016?

Taurus

21 April – 20 May

You've been working like a Trojan and at last you step off that treadmill. Now, you're looking to far horizons, perhaps for an early holiday. In love, you're eager, ardent and, unusually for you, impatient. Compromise will keep things sweet! With children heavily featured this year, someone new could enter your life.

Gemini

21 May – 21 June

With the spotlight on work, money and wellbeing, you'll be rolling up your sleeves and getting stuck in from the start. Physically or mentally, you're digging and delving. Work on kitchens or bathrooms could be on your agenda. On the 20th, you're free to take a trip or start a course. As work opportunities stand out for 2016, this could be your way in.

Cancer

22 June – 23 July

Partnerships are January's big news for you. With a new moon in your love skies, you're taking an existing relationship to the next level. If you're single, chances are you'll meet someone special. Home is key to your wellbeing. In the year ahead, you could look to improve your property or make that dream move.

Leo

24 July – 23 August

This is the month to start afresh, to find a better work/life balance, to prioritise your time and to get fit. Concern over children and loved ones may have dampened your spirits, but with Venus putting the spark back in your life, you'll find plenty to smile about in January. Earnings, money and business are your highlights for 2016.

Virgo

24 August – 23 September

Love, friendships and having fun aren't just for Christmas! This year, the good times spill over well into January. Home is where you're happiest, but give yourself a break on the 24th. Partnerships are the focus of 2016, with September being a major turning point for you.

Libra

24 September – 22 October

Home is hectic over the festivities – you love having people around but you're happy to get back to normal afterwards. Whether you're working from home or not, it's out with the old and in with the new. Financially, this is a busy month. Watch out for changes on the work scene coming up this year.

Scorpio

23 October – 22 November

No time to sit on your laurels – it's all systems go this month! At work, you're high profile and heading for success. However, January's hold-ups mean you'll need to add extra time to journeys. Leisure and creative activities are in focus for you in 2016. Join in, meet new people and have fun!

Sagittarius

23 November – 22 December

With Venus in your sign, you're the bee's knees this month! But money is the main focus. You're up to your ears in paperwork, sorting out accounts and paying bills. Watch stress levels and take a break around the 20th. Home and family are what the next year is all about.

A time traveller's life

As she hits our screens in the shape of Mrs Bumble in *Dickensian*, Caroline Quentin reckons life is sweeter minus the corset and bonnet!

‘One of the delights of appearing in a costume drama is being able to indulge in the fantasy that I’m living in the past. Playing the hideous Mrs Bumble in the BBC One series *Dickensian* has been *huge* fun. The historical accuracy of the costumes and the extraordinary detail of the set make it easy to believe that I’m really living in the Victorian London of Charles Dickens.

And there are some things that, on the surface, are very attractive: beautiful dresses made of luxurious fabrics, real fires and horse-drawn carriages, to name but three. That’s not to mention the men in linen shirts and britches, sporting fabulous mutton chop whiskers and top hats. The soft glow of gaslights and the distant cry of the lamplighter calling through the foggy, cobbled streets is enchanting, too.

It’s fascinating to briefly glimpse the domestic arrangements of a variety of Dickens’s characters. From visiting the lovely home of Miss Havisham, to the squalid den of Fagin, to sipping gin in the Three Cripples Pub with Mrs Gamp.

Of course, at the end of the filming day, I take off my excruciatingly uncomfortable corset and slip into the elasticated waist of my jogging bottoms. I’ll grab my mobile phone and call my healthy, well-nourished kids to say I’ll be on the 7pm train, back home in time to watch a bit of telly with them after I’ve had a hot bath and a curry.

It’s great to “play” at living in Dickensian London, but the realities of life in the 1800s must have been pretty gruelling. For a start, as a woman in her mid-fifties, I’d have been lucky to be alive – people died young back then



Caroline in her latest role as the Victorian Mrs Bumble

and for women, the perils of childbirth (without pain relief) were an added hurdle. If I had been lucky enough to survive giving birth, I’d probably have had an infection of some sort. Smog looks mysterious and moody on camera but was terrible for the lungs, and, with no antibiotics, of course, if you were poor and undernourished, your health would have been fragile indeed. Toothache, headache, period pains, it’s

‘I wonder what Dickens would make of life in modern Britain?’

amazing how much I take that pack of painkillers in my handbag for granted.

Despite the obvious changes in the past 200 years, I do reckon, however, that Dickens would have recognised many of the folk who live in my small town in Devon. The town gossips, the pious do-gooders, the crooks, the bankers, the pickpockets and even the prostitutes are still here! They may not wear corsets or top hats these days, but they can be found in all their fascinating diversity. The thieves may, admittedly, be after your mobile phone and not your silk handkerchief, and the gossip may take place around the water cooler rather than the village

water pump, but the talk is still largely about men, money, marriage and the rich and famous of the day. Tittle-tattle about Queen Victoria’s bustle may have been replaced by discussion of Kim Kardashian’s bum, but you see my point. It’s the same old stuff in new wrapping.

I do wonder sometimes what Dickens would make of life in modern Britain? He was both a campaigner for social equality and a writer who shone a light on the plight of the poor, so there’s a lot that I think he would admire.

TV? Perhaps. Computers? Well, writing *Great Expectations* with automatic spellcheck would have surely been less exhausting than scratching away with a quill on vellum!

Prison reform? I’m sure he’d approve, after all, his father went to prison for debts. Healthcare? What would Dickens make of our well-equipped, well-lit hospitals and the ambulances that speed to our aid in an emergency? These services are available to all of us, regardless of class or income, no matter if we are as rich as Ebenezer Scrooge or as poor as Bob Cratchit, and I think that Dickens would wholeheartedly approve.

As for me, wearing a bonnet is fun and I like pretending to live in the past but I really love living life in the present.’



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